The Triumph of Faith.

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THE

TRIUMPH OF FAITH.

A SEQUEL TO

"HEAVENLY PLACES,"

BEING

THE SUBSTANCE OF ADDRESSES ON THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

BY

STEVENSON A. BLACKWOOD,

AUTHOR OF "HEAVENLY PLACES," ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

BY

ROBERT PEARSALL SMITH.

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INTRODUCTION.

The author of this book is a representative man of the large class of lay evangelists, two thousand in number in Great Britain, it is said, who, aside from any official position, are every where proclaiming the Gospel of the grace of God. In streets, lanes, school-houses, halls, chapels, and aristocratic drawing-rooms, they are with great simplicity and earnestness preaching Christ as a present Saviour, and with no small success in winning souls. Noblemen of high rank, gentlemen of ease, bankers, merchants, tradesmen, even converted chimney sweeps, each first to his own class in life, and then to those beyond, are preaching the good news.

Once the leader of fashion in the court circles of London, the author of this book has become a leader in teaching not only grace, but its practical results of separation from the world. His influential social position, his unusual personal powers of attraction, his eloquence, and above all, his genuine consecration and deep humility, have given him a commanding influence. With decisive energy he has consecrated this influence to the advocacy of the highest standards of practical Christian

life and teaching. As the presiding officer of the great central conferences of the evangelical portion of the Church, held at Mildmay Park, London, he has, with no uncertain sound, preached the responsibility and privilege of complete surrender to God and full trust in all of His promises, as the only true standard of Christian life.

"*The Triumph of Faith,*" is the great need of churches which, but too often, are like battalions of defeated soldiers, dreading, and even expecting continued failure. Paul was able to say, "Thanks be unto God which *always* causeth us to triumph in Christ," and his secret lies in the words, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." While the children of Israel were in the place of unbelief, — the Scripture repeatedly calls the wilderness "the provocation," — they were constantly being defeated; but when they crossed into the promised land, *in the courage of faith*, they took the victorious position. They learned to shout before the battle was fought, and "The Triumph of Faith" was in their own hearts before it was completed in the contest.

As long as Joshua lived, it was a career of uniform victory, so that on his death he was able to say to them, "Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

Joshua died, and then Israel departed from God and failed. But his great anti-type, Jesus, liveth forever. Trusting Him we shall never fail.

Many who have long been content to look upon a life of ailure and weariness, typified by the wilderness

experience of Israel, as their inevitable condition in this life, are now beginning to realize that Jordan does not mean death, nor Canaan heaven. It was a grievous sin in Israel that they did not go into their inheritance at Kadesh Barnea, at once after they had passed the Red Sea. It is no sin in us that we do not go to heaven at once on conversion. We look for things in heaven far better than were ever found in Canaan with all its conflicts and ever rising enemies.

Alas! that while so many take the distinctive name of "Believers," so few are found to be *believing* believers in "the exceeding great and precious promises" of God, so that they "might be partakers of the Divine nature, *having escaped* the corruption that is in the world through lust."

We cordially commend this cheering, hopeful presentation of the *available*, practical privileges of faith, as a most serviceable contribution to the rapidly extending line of teaching as to the available possessions of the believer.

R. P. S.

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I.

APPROPRIATION BY FAITH.

"*Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.*"—JOSHUA i. 3.

THE land was given to the Israelites; but to be enjoyed, it must be appropriated. Unless their feet trod its soil, it was useless to them. Every inch that they claimed became their own; unclaimed, its value could not be realised.

And it is just so with regard to the "spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," which "are freely given us of God." We must claim them if we want to enjoy them; unclaimed, they are like a possession which its owner never visits—an accumulation of treasure which the hand never touches. Many complain of want of realisation of peace and joy, liberty and power. The secret of their dearth of soul lies in this—that they do not step out upon the promises in childlike simplicity

of faith—they do not claim and accept what God has *already* given them; and thus, while "kings' sons," they are "lean from day to day."

What an "exceedingly great and precious promise" is that which stands at the head of this chapter! It extends and deepens and heightens and widens as we look at it. It seems, we might almost say, were it not God's blessed word, too good to be true. Is it, can it be possible, that the extent of realisation is only limited by the extent of our faith?—that God only stops giving when we stop receiving?—that everything the hand of faith touches becomes its own?—that vast possessions yet unexplored, boundless as the fulness of God, are placed at our disposal, and only await our grasp? Yes, blessed be His holy name, it is so; He giveth liberally, He giveth royally, He giveth divinely. He saith, "It is more blessed to give;" and, as He is the source, centre, and sum of all blessedness, He "waiteth to be gracious." He spreads before us an heavenly Canaan, full of "precious things of heaven, of the dew, and of the deep that coucheth beneath, and of the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and of the precious things put forth by the moon, and of the chief things of the ancient mountains, and of the precious things of the lasting hills, and of the precious things of the earth, and fulness thereof, and of the good-will of Him that dwelt in the bush" (Deut. xxxiii. 13–16). He bids us appro-

priate them. He puts, as has been said, a blank cheque-book into the hands of His people, telling us that the treasures in His vaults are inexhaustible, and bids us fill in the amount we want, and sign our names.

Sign *our* names, did I say? Yet not so. The name in which we are authorised to draw upon the divine treasury is already signed—it is the name of JESUS; the promises are "payable to bearer:" faith presents them. The draft *must* be honoured, for it is the promise of "God, that cannot lie;" and the word is fulfilled, "*Whatsoever* ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you."

Old and New Testaments agree that this is the secret of realisation of blessing, this the principle of joyful success,—appropriation by faith. The first volume of God's book says, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you" (Josh. i. 3). The second volume says, "According unto your faith, be it unto you" (Matt. ix. 29).

Let us then dwell for a short time on this glorious promise, recalling the circumstances under which it was given,* and endeavouring to understand its application to ourselves, for whose learning it was written aforetime (Rom. xv. 4).

* The opening chapters of the book of Joshua have formed the subject of a previous volume ("Heavenly Places"), in which the death of Moses, the transfer of leadership to Joshua, the passage of the Jordan, the burial of the twelve stones in its bed, the erection

Although uttered on the wilderness side of Jordan, the promise had reference mainly to the other side, the land flowing with milk and honey, which was to be the dwelling-place of the people of God, and the scene of the manifestation of His glory. It was spoken on the eve of their passage through the Jordan, and regarded them as already in the land of Canaan.

The people had now been for forty years pilgrims in the wilderness, and the faithless generation that had refused to go up at the bidding of the Lord from Kadeshbarnea had all died out. Only Caleb and Joshua remained of the men of war. The believing men lived still, but only they; for faith alone inherits the promises.

How fearful were the consequences of the unbelief manifested at Kadeshbarnea! (Num. xiv.) What disappointment and sorrow it brought upon the people! *Forty* weary years were occupied in a journey which, we learn from Deut. i. 2, 3, need only have taken *eleven* days—years that are described afterwards as "the provocation, the day

of the other twelve stones in the land, the second circumcision, the passover in the plains of Jericho, the exchange of corn for manna, and the assumption of command by the angel of the Lord, are used to illustrate the death of the believer to the law, his burial with and resurrection in Christ, together with the consequences that result from these facts, and the steps that precede his conquest and enjoyment of the land of promise here below. I shall therefore only recur to the scenes there described, and the lessons they teach, so far as may be necessary for the completeness of the subject of the present volume.

of temptation in the wilderness," and of which it is said in the same place by God, "Forty years long was I *grieved* with this generation" (Ps. xcv. 8, 10).

Might not these forty years have been spared? Was the weary wandering in "that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought, where there was no water," absolutely necessary? Was it God's purpose when He brought the people out of Egypt, to keep them in such a place for forty years? To all this we must answer, Nay. God "brought them *out*" that He might "bring them *in*" to the land (Exod. vi. 6, 8). The journeying to and fro without making any progress, the hunger and the thirst, were brought upon the people by their own unbelief. True, those forty years were used by God to teach them wondrous lessons. Israel learned much concerning themselves and much concerning God, that their dull hearts could have learned in no other way. Their own utter inability to keep His commandments, their obstinacy, pride, and perverseness, were all brought out to the full; they were humbled, and taught their dependence upon God; and at the same time they learned the marvellous grace and love and wisdom and power of Him who "suffered their manners in the wilderness," "forsook them not," "fed them according to the integrity of His heart, and guided them with the skilfulness of His hand" (Ps.

lxxviii. 72). Lessons to be remembered for ever were taught them there; for they were bidden to "remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; *that He might make thee know* that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deut. viii. 2, 3). But it was their unbelief and obstinacy that made this painful instruction necessary. The deliverance at the Red Sea, the sweetening of the waters at Marah, the supply of the manna near Elim, and of the waters at Rephidim, should have sufficed to teach, had they had the grace to learn them, all the lessons which the wilderness-pilgrimage alone availed to burn into their minds.

But at length the painful discipline was over, every doubting one had perished in the wilderness. Unbelief had, for a time at least, died out, and the nation approached the land of promise an army of *believers*. By faith they pass through Jordan, there are no shrinkings and doubtings; and under the leadership of Joshua they stand prepared to enter upon possession of the "glorious land."

But now, with the Jordan behind them and the

wilderness lost sight of, they are reminded that all their enjoyment of the land depends on the continued exercise of that faith which had at length been put forth. The land was occupied by mighty enemies, who had held undisputed possession for hundreds of years. Giants were among them, and their cities were "walled up to heaven." How were they to be dispossessed? By the faith of Israel. They only had to tread upon the land to make the spot thus touched their own. Trust in God must be *exercised;* they must step personally in the strength of faith upon the land that owned another's sway, and each step made the territory thus claimed their own.

If they had shrunk from this exercise of faith, if questionings, reasonings, doubtings, had been allowed to keep them back, not an inch would have been theirs, and the land which was given to them by Jehovah would have yielded them no enjoyment. It was only by a bold yet simple trust that they could realise the blessings in store for them, and become the joyful possessors of the portion that God had in store for them.

The application of all this to ourselves is simple. The unbelief which arises in the heart when on the very verge of the rest and enjoyment of all the promises, the consequent weary wanderings, failures, and discipline entailed, are, alas! facts which few, if any, have been unacquainted with. Is it not true with many a reader of these

pages, that although on the first apprehension of deliverance from condemnation by faith in the precious blood of Christ, and of further deliverance by the same Almighty Saviour, from the power of the world which hindered our progress, the song which Israel sang on the shore of the Red Sea has found its echo in our hearts, and that while uttering its triumphant tones we thought not of defeat or failure, but saw all future obstacles melting away, and ourselves entering with joy upon the inheritance of peace provided for us, these songs of praise were ere long exchanged for cries of unbelief and fear, as one trial of faith after another was permitted to come upon us?

Murmurings and reproaches have often filled the hearts, if they have not escaped the lips, of those who, in the first burst of spiritual joy, trusted God fully to do as much for them in the future as He had done in the past. And though each fresh exhibition of impatience and distrust has called forth fresh manifestations of the forbearance and power and grace of God, His goodness has not quelled their unbelief, nor shamed them into faith.

And then at last, when they have stood within full view of all the "spiritual blessings in heavenly places" which have been provided for them, when some savour of the goodness of the land of promise has reached them, and they have actually handled and tasted its rich fruit, unbelief has again risen up, as giants and walls were thought

upon and magnified—yes, magnified; for unbelief ever exaggerates difficulties, and makes them out far greater than they really are.

How strikingly this appears from the account given by the spies of the obstacles in the land. They said the sons of Anak were so great that they themselves were but "as grasshoppers in their sight," and that the cities were "walled up to heaven." What gross exaggerations! For the Israelites to be as grasshoppers compared with the sons of Anak, the latter would need to have been fifty times as tall as they really were; and as for the cities being walled up to heaven, the statement was, on the very face of it, absurd. But the trembling spies said so in their wretched unbelief, and craven, doubting Israel took up the cry. And so it always is. To unbelief difficulties seem always much greater than they really are, for it leaves God out of sight, who is alone the true standard whereby to measure all things; whereas faith, comparing the giants with Jehovah, and the high walls with the omnipotence of heaven, thinks nothing of the obstacles, and steadfastly pursues its way.

And what has been the consequence? Years, it may be, of wilderness life—backwards and forwards, but no real progress; occasional mountings into a higher atmosphere, but as frequent relapses into the mists of doubt; the failures more numerous than the victories; the presence of the "ser-

pents" and the "scorpions," and the unsatisfied longing in the land wherein there is "no water." May not the life of many a Christian be described in these words? They have not realised the blessedness they saw before them, and their experience is fitly described in the words of the well-known hymn:—

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

Of course it cannot; the wilderness never can be, and was never meant to be, the portion of Israel; and the life to which it corresponds was never meant to be the life of the children of the Lord God Almighty. The world can never fill the heart which has once realised peace with God, and tasted, however slightly, of the fulness of joy which is in His presence.

A wilderness life can never be a happy life; and yet many Christians have ceased to expect anything better. True, in one sense we are in the wilderness as long as we are in this world; for we must be dependent on the perpetual supplies of grace, be guided by the pillar of the Lord's presence, and be ever travelling. But though this

is one aspect of the position of the believer, it is not the only one. In another he is regarded as being already in the promised land, "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" —the land where he may win constant victories, and while fighting, yet know what "rest in the Lord" means. And it is this which is the normal, the proper position of every Christian. If he has to pass through the wilderness, he need not be forty years about it. Eleven days was the necessary time, and the long years of failure, disappointment, and backsliding are attributable to unbelief alone. They are not necessary. They may be avoided. Nay, they ought to be avoided; for the apostle, after bringing before us the fearful consequences of doubt in the case of the Israelites, "whose carcases fell in the wilderness," says, "Let us labour" (literally, *hasten*, *i.e.*, not be forty years about it instead of eleven days) "to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. iv. 11). Israel's failure is recorded for our warning, not for our imitation; to be avoided, not copied.

And yet can we not see, who are conscious that for long years, it may be, we have omitted to profit by their history, how a gracious God has used the years of wandering to teach us, as He taught them, lessons, which we might have learnt in an easier school had we not doubted, but which He has not failed in His patient care for His children

to bring home to us in another way? He has indeed dealt with us as sons; not forsaking us in our backslidings, but graciously correcting us, that "we might be partakers of His holiness," and learn at length to "enter into His rest," and to dwell, even here below, in the good land, in the kingdom of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

And, as at last with Israel, the men of war in whom they trusted all died out from among them (Deut. ii. 14), and the generation that believed not fell in the wilderness one by one; so at length it comes, with some at least, that all their strength, the flesh in which they trusted, comes to an end, and the last vestige of that unbelief which feared the difficulties and doubted God's power to overcome them, dies away.

Then once more we stand upon the borders of the land of blessing, no longer trembling and doubting, but believing that God will bring us in, and realising that we have died, been buried, and raised with Christ (as typified by the passage through Jordan). We see the lovely prospect before us, the plains flowing with milk and honey, the vineyards and the cornfields, and though here and there we also see tremendous obstacles, "all the power of the enemy," we hear the divine voice saying unto us, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses" (Josh. i. 3).

The land must be appropriated *by faith.* In no other way could the natural Israel obtain possession of the earthly Canaan; in no other way can the spiritual Israel "inherit the promises." Faith would have sufficed forty years before. Faith alone is needed now.

But it must be faith in *action.* It would not have been of any use for the people to have admired the land and heard the promise, and to have said that they believed it; they would have been no richer as to enjoyment, as to actual possession, than if they had remained in Egypt. They must, in simple trust on Him who spake the word, step forward, plant their feet on the soil, and that very moment it became their own. Neither will an inactive faith avail you, reader. Indeed, there is no such thing as an inactive faith. There is, it is true, such an intellectual assent to the reality of certain facts as devils are obliged to give—"Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble; but wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" A faith whose possessor never moves, acts, works, is a nonentity, a dead, a *diabolical* faith. It is of no use. It encashes none of heaven's cheques; it wins no victories; it brings no peace.

True, living trust steps forward; it turns promises into possessions; it claims their fulfilment, and is not disappointed. Look at Peter. He is bid—and

Christ's commands are promises—to walk on water. He trusts, steps out on the yielding liquid, and it becomes firm as the rock under his tread. Again he doubts; and as he doubts the water gives way, and he begins to sink. God's promises always sustain a trusting, never a doubting soul. What is the secret of floating on the water? Quiet trust. Use your own strength, move by your own power, and the body sinks to some extent. Trust the element entirely, and you may lie upon its surface.

How strange it must seem to a bird the first time it commits itself to an invisible element through which the law of gravitation would apparently cause it to fall to destruction; but the open wings claiming support from the atmosphere are not deceived, and it floats on thin air. So is it when the soul casts itself upon the promises of an invisible God. Creatures without wings, if they could reason, would deem it suicidal folly of the bird to throw itself out of its nest, trusting to that which it could not see; and to a world without faith the ventures of a believing man are the actions of a madman. But they are not so; "underneath are the everlasting arms," the "exceeding great and precious promises"—empty sounds to him that doubts, are as mighty powers in the world of faith as is the atmosphere in the world of nature, and they never fail to sustain the soul that ventures out helplessly and wholly upon them. Trust alone

is needed, and every step of trust acquires foothold, and gains strength and encouragement to take another.

And then how unlimited the promise—"*every* place." Yet what were the places? There may have been unoccupied spots, and plains in which no armies stood to contest the invader; but if there were, on the other hand, Jericho and Ai, Libnah and Makkedah, Hazar and Hebron, with their kings, their armies, and their giants, were ready for the battle. Were these included in the promise? Yes; "every place." — "There shall no man be able to stand before you."—"One of you shall chase a thousand."—"I have given you the land."

The number of the enemy, the height of the walls, the stature of the giants, therefore, mattered not: they were not to be taken into calculation. Unbelief wished to ascertain whether the inhabitants of the land were "strong or weak, few or many," "what cities they dwelt in, whether in tents or in strongholds" (Num. xiii. 18, 19). And unbelief, of course, looking at "things seen," came to the conclusion, "They are stronger than we" (ver. 31); "all the people we saw in it are men of great stature" (ver. 32). But faith has to do with "things not seen," with "Him who is invisible," and measures not difficulties; or if it does measure them, measures them against the power of God; and thus all difficulties are alike small. Strong or

weak, few or many, giants or dwarfs, tents or strongholds, it is a matter of indifference; for to Him whose power faith uses, the "nations are as the small dust of the balance," the "isles" are "as a very little thing," and "the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers."

Ah! yes. If we look at difficulties from God's standpoint—and this is faith's proper standpoint—they become very small. Did we meet a man of Goliath's height in the street, his stature might indeed appal, for, seen from our own level, we should have to look up at him; but if we mounted to the top of St Paul's, and thence beheld him, we should see no difference between the giant and the man of ordinary size. Thus is it when we look down upon difficulties from the heavenly places where we are privileged to stand with God. The objects which, seen from our own level, threaten to crush us, seen from His level, looked at by faith, dwindle into insignificance; and we are ready to say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

We may and must have many difficulties in our way; the world, the flesh, and the devil—those three sons of Anak that oppose the onward progress of every soldier of Christ—will certainly oppose us also, and our own resolutions, skill, or courage are no match for the mighty power arrayed against us. And yet onward progress is not only commanded, but the secret of its attainment is revealed—*faith*

in the promises of an unchangeable, an omnipotent God.

It is by these, "the exceeding great and precious promises," that we "become partakers of the divine nature,"—not so much in its commencement, for the new, the divine life is begun in us the moment we, by the grace of God, trust in the Lord Jesus as our own Saviour, but in its growth, development, realisation, and enjoyment. Do we see a goodly land "of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" spread before us—a blessed experience of rest, satisfaction, and victory—described in the Word as that which is part of the "things prepared by God for them that love Him?" Are we conscious, at the same time, that there are mighty powers within us and without us barring the way and contesting, as old inhabitants of the land, our right to such a glorious inheritance? And do we not hear, at the same time, a divine voice saying to us, "Only believe!"—"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses?" "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Yes; the secret of progress is faith—the child-like trust of a perfectly helpless one in the power, will, and love of Him who is "*mighty to save.*" Taking Him at His word, the enemies melt away, the difficulties vanish, the clouds disperse; faith, clinging to the promise of an invisible One, steps

out upon the good land, and by that very act of venture possesses that which it grasps. It does not wait to feel strong before it acts, but moves onward, and is not disappointed: where it seemed there was nothing but yielding water, there is a pavement firm as the rock; the touch of faith turns promises into realities—

> "Laughs at impossibilities,
> And cries, It shall be done."

We are not to wait for feelings, for the evidence of sense, before we believe; those who thus wait, fearing to move forward till some inward experience corroborates the promise, must wait in vain; the good land will not approach them: they must claim it in the venture of faith, and according to their faith so will it be unto them. To sense it may seem a leap in the dark—the desperation of credulity—but to the child that knows its Father's voice, though the Father be Himself unseen, it is no such thing—it is a *reasonable* trust.

How apparently unreasonable was the conduct of that man who, after taking a journey to Christ in order to induce Him to return with him and heal his dying son, went home again without Him, without so much as a prescription, with nothing but a bare word, "Thy son liveth!" He had nothing to confirm his faith, but he "believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way." And he was not disappointed. "At the self-same hour the fever left him." He rested his

hopes and his happiness on the word of the Lord, and the blessing was his.

This, then, is the secret of the victory, whether it be over the powers that withstand us in the world, over the corruptions within us that seem so invincible, or over the devil,—trust in the promise and power of God. The trust is nothing in itself, there is neither merit nor strength in it, but it clings in helplessness to an almighty One, and thus "obtains promises," "subdues kingdoms," "waxes valiant in fight," and "turns to flight the armies of the aliens," while God on whom it leans gets all the glory.

Learn then, believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, to be indeed a *believer*—not one who "staggers at the promises of God" because of their very greatness, who refuses to go up into the good land though it lies at his feet, because of the power of the inward and outward enemies. Your circumstances, your temperament, your passions may be all against you, and, looking upon them, you may have felt inclined to despair of ever getting anything more than a wilderness life of failures and defeats, falls and humiliations, dissatisfaction and disappointments. Doubt no longer. He who cannot lie saith, "Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and *over all the power of the enemy*."

Can anything be wider than this? Can you want more? The "shield of faith" is still able

to "quench *all* the fiery darts of the wicked;" and though the "imaginations" and the "high things that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God," within and without you, are indeed "strongholds," the "weapons" of your warfare are "*mighty through God*" to "pull them down," and to "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you."

And you, dear reader, to whom this text in its primary and fullest sense does not apply, who are not only not on the borders of the promised land, but who are still under the bondage of sin, with its unforgiven weight resting on your conscience; though the promise, in its strictest sense, relates to those who are forgiven and saved, and who are seeking to attain the realisation and enjoyment of the good land which the Lord has prepared for His people, the principle on which it is based is one that applies equally to all. It is this:—Claim in faith what you need, and it is yours; in other words, "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

What is it, then, you want? Are you unforgiven, needing pardon for a past life of sin and God-forgetfulness? There are promises for you: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Grasp the promise. Let the sole of your foot tread—not to trample on, but to

claim, that blessed place in the kingdom of God—the first standing-point in the life of God—*the forgiveness of sins.* You repeat, it may be, week after week, the words, "I believe in the forgiveness of sin." And are you yet unforgiven? Why are you so? Because you have believed in it as a theory, not grasped it as a fact for yourself. You have seen the good land—perhaps beheld others walking in it; you have assented intellectually to the plan of salvation, but you have not made it your own; you have not laid hold of eternal life—you have not trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for yourself.

Then let this be the moment for *claiming* for yourself the pardon which lies before you, waiting your acceptance. It is ready for you;—Christ has died, the blood has been shed, the atonement made and accepted. God "waiteth to be gracious." Grasp by faith the promise, so full and free, of pardon and salvation, and it is *yours*, never to be taken away from you. More, infinitely more, may lie before you to be subsequently realised. But this is the beginning; and as you press onward towards the enjoyment of "all the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of Christ," you will find that the means by which you obtained the first blessing of pardon and life everlasting is the means by which all the further gifts of God are realised: "According unto your *faith* be it unto you." "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you."

II.

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH.

"*Only be thou strong, and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.*" —JOSHUA i. 7.

"*Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*"—ROMANS iii. 31.

THE objection which many have made to the freeness of salvation by faith only, without the works of the law,—that it leads to carelessness and sin, is no new one. It is as old as St Paul's time, and is conclusively met and refuted by him in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where he shows that, as dead men do not go on living in a world with which their connection has been broken by death, so it is impossible that men who have died and been buried with Christ, and whose connection with and subjection to sin has thus been severed, can go on living in that to which they

have died. "How shall we that have died to sin live any longer therein?"

This is conclusive argument, based on reason and common sense, and is indeed sufficient. But the temple of truth is supported by many buttresses, and it is incumbent on us to notice all the pillars by which God has been pleased to sustain the glorious edifice. We are to "tell the towers thereof, and mark well her bulwarks;" and the more we do so, the more shall we see how firm and stable are her walls, how beautiful and harmonious are her proportions.

It is, then, not only manifest from the fact of union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, that to go on living in sin is unnatural and monstrous, but also that to walk after the commandments of God is natural and reasonable, since it was one of the purposes for which we have been redeemed unto Him. To serve God, *i.e.*, to walk in His ways, to "keep His commandments, and to do those things that are pleasing in His sight," and thus to glorify Him, is, we may say, the great end and object for which redemption has been effected; and to continue in sin is to go entirely contrary to the purpose which God had in view in our salvation. For it is a salvation not only from the penalty, but also from the power of sin. Salvation from the penalty was necessary before salvation from the power could be enjoyed, and salvation from the power is the necessary and proper consequence of

salvation from the penalty. The one is the complement of the other. The people of God are "elect *unto obedience.*"

It is often argued, on the other hand, that the law is no rule of life to the believer; that having been delivered from its just penalty by the death of Christ, he has nothing to do with it as a code of regulations for his conduct; that being "in Christ," he is out of the region of, above and beyond the law; and that to walk in Christ, and after Christ, is the only rule which he has to regard.

There is something very plausible in this, and it is a view which may be supported by many passages of Scripture, which, taken alone, would appear to justify it; but it will be seen, I think, on a wider and deeper consideration of "all Scripture," that such a view is but one-sided, and does not properly represent the relation of the believer in Christ to the law of God.

There are many ways in which the truth (for such I believe it to be), that the law is given to the people of God as their rule of life, could be exhibited and proved; but I will confine myself at present to the following considerations, which alike meet the arguments that deliverance from condemnation leads to carelessness, and that deliverance from the condemning power of the law relieves us from its ruling power—viz., the *object* of redemption, the *purpose of our introduction* into "heavenly

places in Christ," the *direct teaching of the New Testament*, and the *example of the Lord Jesus.*

First, The object of redemption.

Looking at this point in the light which the typical history of the children of Israel throws on it, we at once see that "service to God," that is, obedience to His laws, could not be carried out until redemption had been effected, and that it was the end for which that redemption was wrought. The very first announcement of the salvation that was about to be wrought for them was accompanied by an intimation of the object in view, "When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall *serve God* upon this mountain" (Exod. iii. 12); and each reiteration of the command to Pharaoh to release Israel from its bondage was followed by the words, "That they may *serve* Me." Seven times was the command repeated, "Let My people go." There could be no service of God in Egypt. Deliverance from its power, and separation from its ways, must precede service; but once delivered from the condemnation that fell on Egypt, rescued from its power to retain, and separated from contact with it by the barrier of the Red Sea, service to God was to find its proper place.

No sooner, therefore, were the people fairly brought into the wilderness, than the revelation of God's will concerning them was made in the commandments given on Mount Sinai; on the very mountain on which Moses had been told that

Israel should serve the Lord, the "ten words" were proclaimed which contained the whole law; and the close connection between redemption and obedience was manifested in the opening utterance from the Mount, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: *thou shalt have no other gods before me.*"

And this precisely foreshadowed the intimate connection which exists between our redemption from wrath whilst the slaves of sin, and the obedience to Him who delivered us which is meant to be the consequence of that redemption. I need refer but to one or two passages of Scripture as exhibiting this truth in the clearest possible manner.

In the prophecy uttered by Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, we find him describing the promised salvation in these terms—"That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hands of all that hate us; that we, *being delivered* out of the hand of our enemies, *might serve Him* without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life" (Luke i. 71, 74, 75). What does this show—a statement inspired by the Holy Ghost—but that, as deliverance must be the indispensable prelude to service, so a happy, holy, and continuous service in the presence of God our Saviour is the proper consequence of the deliverance?—*happy*, because "without fear" (for "fear hath torment, but perfect love casteth out fear");

holy, because "in holiness and righteousness;" *continuous*, because "all the days of our life;" *in His presence*, because "before Him."

How different is this from the bondage of a religion which hopes ultimately to attain to salvation by means of service! There is no *happiness* in that, for the soul that is endeavouring to estab lish its own righteousness by the works of the law is conscious that it is not yet free from condemnation; the burden of unforgiven sin still lies heavy, forebodings of wrath still terrify it; it has no peace, for "fear hath torment." There is no *holiness* in such service, for holy service can only be the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit of God in the heart, of which He is the welcome and abiding guest; and He dwells in no heart that has not trusted in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God. There is no *continuity* in such service; there are fitful, constrained, wearisome efforts to do the will of God, coupled with frequent falling back and the depressing sense of failure. Such a life resembles more the occasional flow of water from a pipe to which it must be brought by hard manual labour, laboriously pumped up, than the ceaseless, steady, onward rolling of the river, the source of which is not human energy, but the mighty power of the Holy Ghost. Such service is not *in the presence* of God. The delight of that presence, the "fulness of joy" which is there, is unknown to it; it seeks to obtain entrance

by its efforts, and instead of serving "before Him," wearies itself with endeavours to find the way.

No; it is only when Jesus is trusted in, His great salvation received, and deliverance appropriated by faith, that true happy service to God begins. Such service is not the cause, but the consequence of salvation. It is, to quote the words of Zacharias once more, when "*knowledge* of salvation" is "given" to us "by the remission of our sins" that our "feet are guided into the way of peace."

The same truth is expressed by David in the most concise manner possible in the 116th Psalm, verse 16th, "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid: Thou hast loosed my bonds." What! bonds loosed and yet a servant? Yes, truly; and only a servant when the bonds have been loosed—and a servant for the very reason that they have been loosed; for it is only when the fetters of sin are broken that we are free to enter into the service of another master; or, as the same inspired writer describes in another place, "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart"—*i.e.*, as the Prayer-Book version has it, "When Thou hast set my heart at liberty."

Can there be any other natural consequence of liberty than the free use and action of the liberated powers? If conscience, mind, heart, and will, all enslaved by sin, are freed by the redeeming blood of Christ from the weight of guilt, the fear of

judgment, the power of the world, and the love of sin, must they not "seek the things that are above?" What could result, what was intended to result, from the removal of the grave-clothes that chained the tongue and bound the hands and feet of the quickened Lazarus, but the free use of those members which had been petrified by death—the tongue to tell His praises who had given him life, the hands to do Him service, the feet to run the way of His commandments? Truly, he also could say, "O Lord, I am Thy servant; Thou hast loosed my bonds."

Let such as argue that the conscious possession of a new and an eternal life, and the knowledge of acceptance with God, tend to carelessness and sin, consider whether the breath of life breathed into him afresh, the rejoicing glow of restored vitality, the fresh air of heaven, and the presence of the Saviour Himself, were likely to lead Lazarus to seek the darkness and corruption of the tomb again; or whether the possession of a right mind by him who had been the self-destroying slave of a legion of devils (Mark v.) was likely to lead such an one again to dwell among tombs and to cut himself with stones? The very idea is absurd, and the fact that it ever could enter into the conception of rational beings, only shows how true it is that "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." The Word of God, who cannot lie, tells us that,

"being made free from sin, we become the servants of righteousness."

But, once again, let us notice the object of redemption as given in Rom. viii. 1, 4. In that well-known passage the apostle, after stating in the first verse the soul-rejoicing fact, that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," and showing, in the second, that the freedom from condemnation (the consequence of the law of sin and death) is the result of the operation of the new law or principle of the "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," proceeds to explain, in the third verse, the manner in which this freedom from condemnation has been effected—viz., by the condemnation having taken effect on the Son of God, who, coming "in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin," became the sinner's substitute, and bore his penalty. He then goes on to describe the object for which this substitution took place—and what is it? That we might live "after the flesh"—that we might, now that the penalty of the law had been borne, treat lightly its requirements as to holiness? No; "that the *righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*"

The proper consequence, then, of death under the penalty of the law is death to the power of sin; the natural result of life in the Spirit is a walk according to the Spirit—a fulfilling of the requirements of that law which is love to God and love to man.

The object of redemption is the glory of God in the life of the redeemed, and that can only be by keeping His commandments.

Again, *our introduction into "heavenly places in Christ"* is for the same purpose, and this we once more learn from the careful consideration of the history of Israel.

As it was the fact that no service to God could be carried out in Egypt, so also it appears that even in the wilderness their service must necessarily be very defective. True, the commandments were given there, and the complete directions for their life were minutely laid down there. Their service also commenced there, but it was only in the land of promise that those directions could be executed in their integrity: and we accordingly find that the Book of Deuteronomy, which contains the manual of their service, again and again refers to the land as the scene in which the commandments of God were to be fully obeyed.

This is expressly stated, amongst other passages, in Deut. xii. 1, where we read thus,—"These are the statutes and judgments which ye shall observe to do in the land which the Lord God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it;" and the obedient and law-keeping condition which was to characterise their dwelling in the land is contrasted with the comparatively lawless and irregular habits of their life in the wilderness, since we read in the 8th and 9th verses—"Ye shall not do after all the things

that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you."

No less than between twenty or thirty times in that book is it specially mentioned that the commandments have reference to their conduct "in the land whither they go to possess it," and it is no less evident from the nature of the regulations in Deuteronomy, and also in Leviticus, that by far the greater portion of them could only be attended to and obeyed in the land itself. Since, therefore, as we have already seen, service to God was the object of their redemption out of Egypt, and that service could only be executed in the land of promise, it is manifest that to render such obedience to the laws of God possible was the object of their introduction into that land.

But this appears in a still clearer light from the typical character of the position of Israel in the land of promise as compared with their previous condition. Viewed as the appointed type of the family of God—the earthly foreshadowing of the heavenly reality—we may briefly say that their history in its various stages exhibits the different positions in which the individual believer or the Church at large is placed, and the successive phases of experience through which they pass.

Thus Israel, a slave in Egypt, exposed to condemnation, represents the sinner—the servant of

sin and of the world, and under the wrath of God; sheltered under the blood of the Lamb, we see the consequence of trust in the blood of Christ, namely, salvation from judgment; separated from Egypt by the Red Sea, with the Egyptians dead on the sea-shore, we see the saved people separated from the world by the death of Christ, and the world consequently dead to them. Wandering in the wilderness, humbled, chastened, yet graciously and miraculously accompanied, sustained, protected, and guided by God himself, we have vividly before us the ups and downs, the falls and discouragements of the generality of the people of God, and at the same time the judgment and mercy of a faithful and long-suffering Redeemer. Lastly, in Israel passing through Jordan by faith in the power of God,—as manifested in the ark standing in its bed to keep back the overwhelming stream,—in the burial of the twelve stones in the river, and the erection of the other twelve in Gilgal, we see pourtrayed the blessed fact, which is true concerning every believer in Christ though not equally understood and realised by all in their own experience, that each member of the redeemed family is united to Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and by faith in Him leaves judgment behind, and enters upon the possession of "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

It was only when Israel reached this stage in their history that they were in a position fully to serve

God and to keep His commandments. Moses must die, and Joshua arise, before they could enter the land and obey the directions given for their life there.

And so it is only when we *in our experience* see that we are "dead to the law by the body of Christ," and are "married to Him that is raised from the dead,"—in other words, that we have exchanged Moses for Jesus, salvation by the works of the law for salvation by the work of Christ, that we are in a position to bring forth fruit unto God. It is doubtless for this reason that, as before remarked, the apostle brings no precepts to bear upon the Ephesian and Colossian believers until he has fully explained to them their position as dead, buried, and risen with Christ. The first half of each of those epistles is occupied with the exhibition and elucidation of that wondrous truth, and then the latter half follows with its practical teaching. And it will be noticed that in hardly any part of the New Testament do such minute directions for the everyday earthly life of Christians occur, as in those two epistles which, beyond all others, set forth the heavenly position of the believer in its most exalted character.

To what conclusion, then, does all this lead us? Why, to this, that obedience to the commandments of God, service to Him, the regulation of our conduct by His laws, and the performance of every, even the smallest, duty with a view to His glory, is the proper result and consequence of entrance upon

the enjoyment of all those "spiritual blessings in Christ" which are typified by the richness of earthly blessings in Canaan; and, therefore, that God's purpose in uniting us to Himself in Christ, and bringing us into the marvellous possession of such unsearchable riches, is not that we may live in carelessness or independence of His rule, but that, on the contrary, it is with the spiritual as it was with the natural Israel, "He brought forth His people with joy, and His chosen with gladness; and gave them the lands of the heathen; and they inherited the labour of the people; *that they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws.*"

Israel had no life in Egypt until saved by the grace of God; its childhood commenced then ("when Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt," Hos. xi. 1), and was, so to speak, educated in the wilderness; and upon the completion of that education the people arrived at maturity and entered upon possession of their inheritance. The natural result of life, education, and manhood was then to follow—namely, the conduct and actions of manhood; but such result could not take place before. So also, we, "when we were children were in bondage," but being redeemed, pass under the chastening and educating hand of the Father of Spirits,* in order that at last, "no more children tossed to and fro with

* Of course in another sense the education of the believer is never completed; man is always learning to the end of his life, and the people of God will through time and eternity be ever learning to know God.

every wind of doctrine," we should walk worthy of the vocation whereunto we are called as men in Christ, matured and strong, fulfilling the end for which we were created and redeemed—that is, glorifying God by obedience to His will.

Indeed, true, intelligent, hearty, joyful obedience is impossible until trust in a living Saviour, with whom we are one by faith, is exercised. As the unbelieving generation died out before Jordan was crossed, so unbelief must cease before we can enter into "the rest which remaineth for the people of God," in order thus to "walk worthy of Him unto all pleasing."

Let us now see how far the *direct teaching of the New Testament* justifies the assertion that the law, though shorn of its condemning power on the believer by reason of his having already undergone its sentence, death, is nevertheless the rule of his life.

In speaking of the *law*, I do not, of course, refer to that portion of it known as the *ceremonial* law—viz., that which had to do with washings, sacrifices, feasts, days, seasons, and such like. That was essentially Jewish, and passed away with all its shadows when the reality to which it pointed was come. The "meat," and "drink," and "holy days," and "new moons," and "Sabbath-days," were, we are told, "a shadow of things to come; but the body (*i.e.*, the substance) is of Christ" (Col. ii. 16, 17). Such things were but "carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation," and were no longer needed when Christ the "High Priest of the good

things (that were) to come" had been manifested. (Heb. ix. 10, 11).

But I speak of that law known as the *moral* law, which had not to do with mere outward ceremonies, but which, though given to Israel in ten commandments, was really embodied in two—the love of God and the love of our neighbour; and it is important to observe that each of those ten commandments is more or less explicitly re-enacted under the Christian dispensation. This may be seen upon a very cursory review.

The first commandment, to worship only God, is expressly made use of by our Lord in that strange conflict with Satan, which is the representation of the fight which we as disciples have to wage; and we surely are not so above our Master that we can afford to dispense with the weapon which He wielded in that strife.

The second, to abstain from idolatry, is directly enjoined on Christians no less than four times (1 Cor. x. 14; Eph. v. 5; Col. iii. 5; and 1 John v. 21), besides many other passages in which it is inferentially conveyed.

The third, to reverence the name of the Lord, and consequently to abstain from all careless and profane language, is amplified by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 33–37), and by the apostles in such passages as Col. iii. 8 and James v. 12.

The fourth, to keep holy the Sabbath-day, may at first sight appear to be omitted in the New Testa-

ment, and such an expression as that quoted from Col. ii. 16 might appear to justify the assertion of many, that obedience to it is not incumbent on Christians. But the teaching of our Lord on that subject must be carefully weighed before such a conclusion can be arrived at. If His words *about* that day, and His miracles *on* that day, be examined, it will be found, I believe, that though He delivered it from the burdensome traditions with which the Jews had encumbered it, and showed what its true purpose was, He in no way abolished the Sabbath. He, on the contrary, asserted its relation, not merely to Jews but to mankind, when He said, "The Sabbath was made for *man*," and showed by His own example, the most potent of all teaching, what might be done on that day. The Sabbath had, no doubt, an aspect which was essentially Jewish; of that He divested it. But the Sabbath was before the law; it existed in Eden, may be traced in patriarchal times, was observed previous to the enunciation of the fourth commandment (Exod. xvi. 23, 25, 26, 29, 30), and like the other institution of Eden, marriage, was to survive when the shadows of the law had passed away.

The fifth commandment, enjoining reverence to parents, is re-enacted in the very words uttered on Sinai, in Eph. vi. 2, 3, and applied to Christians.

Is it necessary to refer at length to the passages in the New Testament which contain the remaining commandments?

Is not the sixth, against murder, enlarged by our Lord in Matt. v. 21, and by St. John, in 1st epistle, iii. 15? Does not the seventh, against uncleanness, obtain a far deeper significance when we read Matt. v. 27, 28 and Eph. v. 3–5?

Is not the eighth, "Thou shalt not steal," expressly stated in the words, "Let him that stole steal no more" (Eph. iv. 28); the ninth, to bear no false witness, in James iv. 11 and 1 Peter ii. 1; and the tenth, in the exhortations against covetousness, in Eph. v. 3 and Col. iii. 5?

We thus find that every single commandment of the ten is repeated more or less explicitly in the New Testament, conclusively showing that our Lord and His apostles at least regarded it as containing those precepts which were to rule and regulate the Christian life; and lest we should have any doubt about it, the Lord Jesus sums up the whole "*law* and the prophets" in the two great commandments—love to God and our neighbour (Matt. xxii. 37–40; and St Paul similarly teaches that "love is the fulfilling of the *law*" (Rom. xiii. 8–10).

The Apostle James, moreover, quoting the Scripture, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," calls it "the *Royal* law"—says that we Christians shall "do well" if we fulfil it; and bids us "look into the perfect law of liberty and continue therein," and so to speak and so to do, as they who shall be judged thereby (James i. 25; ii. 8, 12).

It has been sometimes argued that the law is

merely negative and prohibitory, and that as the Christian life is to be not only an abstaining from evil, but a performance of good, such a law is insufficient and defective. But in the last two instances quoted, both our Lord and St Paul show that the law is not merely negative, prohibiting evil, but positive, enjoining love, and that obedience to the positive injunction carries with it naturally abstention from the evil which is prohibited.

Once again, it has been contended that since, as stated by St Paul in 1 Tim. i. 9, "the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners," &c., &c., it can have no bearing on, or application to, those who, being justified, are no longer "ungodly and sinners," but righteous and "saints in Christ Jesus." It should be noticed, however, that the same passage observes that the "law is good;" and since there remaineth even in the righteous, and in the saint, the inbred sin and carnal mind which clings naturally to all evil, there is surely much necessity that such a weapon as the law, which reveals sin in its exceeding sinfulness, and slays it (Rom. vii. 7, 11–13), should not be laid aside in the constant warfare which the regenerate man wages against sin, but rather be perpetually used.

Surely none are so advanced in holiness as to be able to say that a "thou shalt not" has no

restraining power, no salutary effect, upon their consciences and hearts and lives. The powerlessness of the law lay not in its nature, for it is "spiritual, holy, just, good" (Rom. vii. 11, 14), but in the fact that it had to work in and on a flesh wherein "dwells no good thing" (comp. Rom. viii. 3, vii. 18), which is naturally not subject to the law, but enmity against it (Rom. viii. 7). When, therefore, a new principle is imparted, even "the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," and that Spirit of God, who is omnipotent, dwells in the heart, then surely the fulfilling of the law is not only right, but possible; and the experience of the apostle becomes the proper and normal experience of every child of God, "With the mind I myself serve the *law* of God" (Rom. vii. 25). Then is he not above and beyond the law as a rule of life, "but under the law to Christ" (1 Cor. ix. 21). Then is fulfilled the blessed and glorious promise of the new covenant, "I will put *my laws* into their mind, and write them in their hearts" (Heb. viii. 10).

Yes, surely. The law in its condemning power has vanished for the believer in Jesus, in its ceremonial observances it has passed away for the Christian; but in its spirituality, holiness, justice, and truth, it is still the rule of life to the children of God. "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the

beginning" (1 John ii. 7). It is the old commandment, with a new light upon it, not of burning, terrifying Sinai, but of glorious and attractive Calvary, with the might of the constraining love of Christ, instead of the fear of punishment, and hope of reward, as its energising power. "For this is *love*, that we walk after His commandments" (2 John 6.)

Lastly, and briefly, *the example of the Lord Jesus* himself teaches us the same truth,—that the Christian life is one of obedience to the law.

What was His life from the manger to the cross? Was it not one of love? Did He not love God "with all His heart, and all His soul, and all His strength"? Did He not love His neighbour as Himself? And "love is the fulfilling of the law." On these two commandments hang, He said, "all the law and the prophets." Then "all the law" was kept by Him. How did He regard that law "under which" He was made? (Gal. iv. 4.) He did not regard it as a string of commandments which a "righteous man" need not obey; but He said of it, "Thy law is within my heart" (Ps. xl. 8, compared with Heb. x. 7). He used it in his mysterious conflict with Satan, every answer to the tempter being quoted from Deuteronomy, every arrow being drawn out of the quiver of the law.

Indeed, "He magnified the law, and made it honourable" (Isa. xlii. 21). He came "not to

destroy the law, but to fulfil" (Matt. v. 17). He obeyed it, as the second Adam, in His life; He vindicated it—purified it from Jewish traditions, which had made "the *commandments of God* of none effect." He re-enacted it, and explained its deep spirituality, its exceeding breadth (Ps. cxix. 96), in that Sermon on the Mount which declared its requirements. He added a fresh glory to it when He closed that marvellous summary and exposition of its teaching by characterising "*these sayings of mine*" (Matt. vii. 24–26) as "the will of my Father which is in heaven" (verse 21); and then He yielded that final subjection to it and acknowledgment of its authority when, as the representative of sinners, He came "in the likeness of sinful flesh," and one with them as partaker of flesh and blood, He bare their sins in His own body on the tree, and died that death which the law inflicted as the last penalty of sin.

That crowning act of obedience to the law the believer, it is true, can never perform; nor is it needful. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law." He died for us. We cannot, need not, undergo its penalty. He has borne it in our stead, and we are, by faith in and union with Him, beyond the reach of its condemnation. But "He has left us an example that we should follow His steps," and we shall search in vain to find a higher tone, a deeper spirituality, than that of His most blessed life. That life was one of obedience to

the law as "given by Moses." The most perfect, the only spotless, life lived on this earth was "under the law." Beyond this we cannot get. As He said, "I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John xv. 10); and "I do always those things that please Him" (John viii. 29); so we also, if we wish to abide in His love (and this is almost the closing word of the New Testament, Jude 21), are to "keep His commandments," in order that like Him, and like His beloved apostle, we may be able to say, "We keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." Angelic perfection is not ours on earth, yet "angels that excel in strength do His *commandments*, hearkening to the voice of His word;" and we may be well content to occupy a similar position, and also do His commandments.

Thus, in conclusion, we find that to "observe to do all the law which Moses commanded" is the object of redemption, the purpose of our introductions into "heavenly places in Christ;" that the word with which the Old Testament closes is still needful for the people of God—"Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments" (Mal. iv. 4); and that so far from making "the law void through faith," the apostolic rejoinder is still true, "God forbid: yea, *we establish the law*" (Rom. iii. 31).

III.

THE NOURISHMENT OF FAITH.

"*This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*"—JOSHUA i. 8.

THE prosperity and success of Joshua as the leader of the people depended, then, upon the manner in which he retained, meditated upon, and obeyed all that was "written in the book of the law;" and the same rule applied to all Israel. Yet neither did they become the people of God, nor did they inherit the land as the result and cosequence or reward of their obedience to the law. The inheritance was either the reward of law-keeping, or the gift of free grace; and the declaration of God that it was on the latter terms, and not on the former, that Israel obtained it is clear, "For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: for God gave it to Abraham by promise" (Gal. iii. 18.)

They were redeemed, saved, and adopted, before even the law was given, and so far from entrance into the land being conditional upon keeping the law, it was, as we have seen, only when they were in the land that they were in a position to obey its precepts. At the same time, once they were in the country, their success over their enemies, and their continued enjoyment of the rich blessings of the land, were conditional upon their close adherence to all that was written.

The application of this to ourselves is simple. It is not by the works of the law, by obedience, good deeds, emotions, feelings, or anything that springs out of or is connected with himself that the sinner is justified and saved. "We conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. iii. 28). "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. ii. 8, 9). We must have life before we can obey, even to the slightest extent, any one of the precepts of the Lord. God gives not His law to dead men, or rather, if He does, it is to show that they are legally, morally, and spiritually dead, and are utterly unable to keep those commandments which the fact of their death proves them to have broken. God gives life to the dead; and in the hearts and minds of His living children He writes His laws.

And similarly, our introduction into, and in-

heritance of "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" are not the reward of obedience, but the indispensable preliminaries to obedience, since it is only when by faith we have been united to Him, and are thus brought "*into* the kingdom of God's dear Son," that we are in a position or have the power to walk after His commandments.

Once, however, redeemed, saved, and adopted in Christ, success, prosperity, and continued enjoyment of blessing, depend upon the extent to which we retain, meditate upon, and are governed by that law which, powerless to save the lost, and equally powerless to condemn the saved, is yet the rule of life to those who are "not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Obedience to the commandments is then no longer bondage, but freedom. For the law is the "royal law of *liberty*." "His commandments are not grievous" any more. For with our whole soul we "consent unto the law that it is good." As the requirements of a tender father, as the wishes of a devoted husband, are law to the loving children or to the attached wife, and are yet not irksome, because of love, so is the "yoke easy and the burden light" when "reconciled to God by the death of His Son," "made nigh by the blood of Christ," and "married unto Him that is raised from the dead," the will of God is accepted as that which it is our joy to coincide with and to obey.

The expression of that will, however, is contained in His word, and though salvation is not condi-

tional on obedience, our prosperity, success, and realisation of the good things of the kingdom depend on our treatment of, and adherence to, "all that is written." We may accordingly take this command as directing us to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest all holy Scripture, with a view to carrying out its precepts in our lives, and realising the blessing attached thereto, since "in the keeping of God's commandments there is great reward." Without, therefore, returning to the question which has been discussed in the preceding chapter, concerning that portion of God's word known as the Mosaic law and its application to Christians, let us look at the command before us as having reference to all "God's word written," since "*all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). In the admonition given to Joshua, then, we may notice the duties enjoined—*retention*, *meditation*, *obedience;* and the blessing promised—*prosperity and success.*

Retention.—It is evident that this is needful. The word of God must be remembered and retained, if it is to be meditated upon and obeyed; and so important is this first stage of its treatment by those who hear it, that the destroyer is ever on the watch to prevent its being carried out. "When any one heareth the word of the

kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." Mark says, "Satan cometh *immediately;*" and Luke describes his object as being "lest they should believe, and be saved." He knows well the power of the word to take root when once it gets below the surface; and, therefore, just as the "fowls of the air" are ever hovering near to pick up the seed before it be covered by the kindly earth, he is waiting to take away even from the memory the divine truths which we have read outwardly with ou eyes, or heard outwardly with our ears, lest they should make an impression, and, sinking into the heart, become the root of a new life in the hearer.

Is there one reader of these pages who is not conscious that, even with his eyes on his Bible, or with the words of God sounding in his ears, the truths, however solemn and important they may have been, have been frequently snatched away by wandering thoughts before even the page has been turned, or the echo of the voice that spake them has died away. Or, if retained for the moment, have not the cares of this life, worldly business, idle talk, the news of the day, the sights around you, the "many voices" of this world, dissipated the transitory impression made; so that your reading or hearing has been but liek the momentary glance into a mirror of the man who "be-

holding his natural face in a glass : for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was" (James i. 23, 24).

Oh, my friend, if every word of God had been retained as it first fell upon our ear, or met our eye ; if we had been as careful to hold fast and treasure up those eternal truths, which are "more precious than gold," as we have been to retain and use the "uncertain riches" of this world, what giants in the faith, what "perfect men, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," how "instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," how wise to glorify God, to avoid evil, to help others, should we have been by this time ! That we may be therefore what we are not yet, or at the most but very few of us, the command comes to us, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth." The expression seems to compare the book of the law to food, and to teach us that just as food received into the mouth is useless unless retained, that merely to take it for its pleasant taste and not to swallow it is of no value whatever ; so the Word of God is to be not only received and tasted but kept within us, since "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live."

If the Word of God is to work in our hearts, strengthen us for His service, produce any effect on our lives, it must be first of all received and

retained. Like the roll given to Ezekiel, and the little book to John, the command that accompanies it is, "Take it and eat it up:" then, and then only, can it be profitable to us, and powerful within us. It is when "wisdom *entereth in thine heart*, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, that discretion shall preserve thee and understanding shall help thee." Therefore, the injunction is reiterated, "My son, forget not my law;"—"let thine heart retain my words;"—"take fast hold of instruction; let her not go, for she is thy life;"—"attend to my words, incline thine ear unto my sayings; let them not depart from thine eyes, keep them in the midst of thine heart."

And is it not very gracious of God that to enable us to remember and retain His law, He has caused it to be *written* for us, not only that we may "know the *certainty* of the words of truth" (for how uncertain and untrustworthy would be tradition or mere oral revelation), but that we may be able to keep it in remembrance. Thus the power of memory and the grasp of mind, whereby we are enabled to recollect and hold fast those things that need to be remembered and retained—natural powers as we may call them, but powers without the exercise of which it would be impossible to carry on the affairs of daily life—become most serviceable to the higher life of the soul.

It is almost impossible to overrate the importance of knowing *by* heart the holy Scriptures,

in order that they may be kept *in* the heart; but when memory fails, how blessed is it to have that written, and,—in spite of all assaults upon it,—unchangeable Word of God, "which abideth for ever:" and to know that that has been done for us with God's words which Job longed might be done with his, when he said, "Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" (Job xix. 24, 25.)

Again and again did a merciful God, who knew the treacherousness of memory, and the malice of infidelity, show the provision which He had made against both by means of a written testimony. With His own finger did He write the law on the tables of stone; and when one set was broken, He again "wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments." In order that His words should be in their hearts He said twice subsequently, "Thou shalt *write* them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates" (Deut. vi. 9 and xi. 20). He further enjoined that the kings of Israel should, on their coming to the throne, write out a copy of the law, adding, "And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them" (Deut. xvii. 19). Finally, foreseeing the apostasy of Israel, he commanded Moses to describe their future conduct in the song

contained in the 32nd of Deuteronomy, and bade him "*write* the song and teach it the children of Israel," and to put it in their mouths, that it might be a witness for God against them.

These instances might be multiplied, but they are sufficient to show the steps that God has taken in order that His people may retain and remember His law; and do they not prove the important results that attach to our making a right use of that written word, by giving it attention, by seeking to understand it, and by hiding it in our hearts. Therefore He saith, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth." Dear reader, take this command, not only as a command but as a promise, and then turn it into a prayer, and say with David, "Take not the word of truth out of my mouth; grant me Thy law graciously" (Ps. cxix. 43, 29). To you "this book of the law" is not only the pentateuch; Law, Psalms, Prophets, and New Testament, the full and complete revelation of the Father's heart and will, the written word testifying of the living Word—all, all are yours! Let not sin or Satan, the world or the flesh, business or pleasure, cause you to forget its precepts, or to relax your grasp of its promises. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

But the reception and retention of the law of God is but a means to an end. Received into the mind and retained in the memory, it remains unprofitable unless it becomes the subject of *medita-*

tion. The command therefore follows, "Thou shalt *meditate* therein day and night."

That is true of divine knowledge which is true of all other kinds of knowledge. If the first step towards its acquirement is hearing or reading, and the second retention, so the next must be patient thought and consideration over what has been heard, or, in the word before us, *meditation.* The process by which real benefit is acquired from that which we hear is precisely similar to that by which we derive profit from the food which we eat. Unless digested, and thereby incorporated with ourselves, forming thus part of our system, furnishing in its due proportions nourishment to the blood, the brain, the nerves, the muscles, the flesh and bones of our bodies, its reception will do us no good. Nay, it will harm instead of help. Food rapidly swallowed is, if not absolutely and entirely hurtful, at any rate comparatively unprofitable; and although, perhaps, of some use, injures the delicate organs which are concerned in its digestion. In order that the food of which we partake should benefit us to the full extent, there must be the quiet and comparatively lengthy, or at least leisurely, process of digestion.

So that word "which proceedeth out of the mouth of God,"—this "book of the law,"—must be quietly, patiently, prayerfully thought over, considered, meditated upon, if it is to be really a source of strength to our "inner man," if it is to

furnish,—as it is intended to furnish,—life to our soul, consistency, steadfastness to our Christian character. Carelessly received, "in at one ear and out at the other," what can it profit us? Or if learnt, as it were, by heart—retained in the memory—of what value will it be in forming the strength of our life, unless it be made the subject of meditation? It will rather be a source of injury, as all things are if not rightly used; and as the greatest gifts, when abused, become most harmful, so does the truth of God, if only received into the ear, or deposited in the memory, become a gift which we "wrest to our own destruction," unless by prayer and thought it be applied, through the power of the Holy Ghost, and by means of the intellect which God has given us, to our hearts and consciences, and circumstances and lives.

I believe that hardly anything is so prejudicial to growth in Christian life, such a hindrance to real conversion to God, as the constant hearing of the truth of God, without intelligent reception and meditation thereon. "Gospel hardened" is a phrase we often hear applied to some who have had so long the advantage of the faithful preaching of the message of salvation that its sound has become "familiar in their ears as household words," without its becoming powerful to their souls as the word of life. And scarcely less baneful is the familiarity which real Christians are

so apt to acquire with the Scriptures from constantly hearing them, without giving earnest heed to that which they hear, and carefully considering it with a view to their own guidance in the way of the Lord. Sermons are listened to and criticised, expositions followed, preachers run after, and interesting or difficult passages of Scripture discussed, without that reverent desire to understand the will of God, with a view to obeying it, for which this word is given to us. Are not the words which were used to describe the conduct of the Jews with regard to the message delivered to them by Ezekiel still strikingly applicable to that of many in our day as to their treatment of the book of the law? "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they *hear thy words*, but *they do them not.*"

Can such conduct fail to bring its own punishment with it? What is its legitimate consequence? Why, that instead of good "soldiers of Christ," there are hundreds who know not how, and possess not the courage, to wield the sword of the Spirit; instead of "young men" strong through the word of Christ abiding in them, multitudes are still helpless babes, needing the milk of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, instead of the strong meat which by reason of use they ought to be requiring; instead of "men in Christ" "understanding what the will of the Lord is,"

able to teach and strengthen others, numbers are "tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine," "ever learning, yet never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

And the evil does not stop here. If only the careless hearers were affected thereby, although serious to themselves, the consequences would not be so disastrous as they are. It is far more wide-spreading. Worldlings are encouraged in their worldliness, doubters strengthened in their doubts, and downright sceptics gather arguments for their scepticism, as they point to the nerveless, gloomy, and pusillanimous Christianity of those who are constantly hearing messages which they profess to believe come from heaven, and which assume to convey strength, joy, and courage to the recipient.

It is impossible to estimate the damage done to the cause of Christ, the dishonour brought upon His name, the number of weak followers discouraged, or of opponents strengthened by the results, direct and indirect, of the neglect of prayerful, frequent meditation on "this book of the law."

But enough of the neglect of meditation. What is the advantage of it? Let the divine description of the blessedness of the man whose "delight is in the law of the Lord, and who" doth "meditate therein day and night," tell us. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall pros-

per." Fruitful in his season—doing the right thing in the right time—because "understanding what the will of the Lord is;" unfading in the freshness of his life—the evergreen beauty of his character, untouched alike by summer's scorching suns or winter's frost—because "planted by the rivers of water." He is ever deriving fresh nourishment from that word which, as it comes from the living God, revives wherever it is received; prospering in whatsoever he doeth, because acting only in accordance with the book of the law, the blessing of God rests upon all his works. Was it not the man who said, "O how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day," of whom it is recorded that "he behaved himself wisely" (prospered, margin) "in all his ways, and the Lord was with him"?

There is no bondage in this meditation, as many may be inclined to think. What! say they, are we to be always thinking about the Bible, "all the day," "day and night"? How irksome, how impossible. What is to become of our families, our business? This is the occupation of a recluse, of a hermit, not of men who have to attend to the necessary duties of life. This sounds plausible, but it is the argument of the mind which has no taste for God's Word, no relish for the exceeding great and precious promises, no love for the "excellent things in counsels and knowledge," which are written therein. There is nothing irksome in

eating pleasant food. No sense of constraint in reading again and again and pondering each word in the letter of one who is loved, no bondage in gazing on a lovely scene, or listening to sweet music. True, we cannot always be thus engaged, any more than we can be always enjoying the pleasures just mentioned, but the heart that loves God's law will be ever ready to take advantage of opportunities to occupy itself therewith; and when released from other necessary things will be like the apostles who, "when they were *let go*, went to their own company."

The true meditation does not unfit for the business of lawful callings. Was not Joshua a brave and successful soldier, David a wise and good ruler, Daniel a faithful and eminent statesman? Did their love for and meditation on the book of the law interfere with the diligent discharge of their earthly duties? Nay, it rather furnished them direction, supplied them with strength, kept their minds calm amidst the cares and anxieties of their position, and gave them the true object for which to do everything—the glory of God. It brought them into contact with the spirit, not the letter of the law, with the living God who gave it—their Saviour, Counsellor, and Friend.

I cannot do better here than quote the words of one (I know not who) who has thus spoken:—

"The *study* of God's Word may be concentrated, deep, constant, like searching for a vein of gold;

and *memory* may marvellously retain and bring forth what *study* has discovered. But *meditation* is not the discovery of more or of new things, but a calm sitting down with God to *enrich itself* with what study has discovered, and *feeding with Him* upon the stores which memory has laid up.

"Study and memory make the ready and admired speaker; meditation, the sweet, living exhibition of Jesus everywhere, whether speaking or silent (Jos. i. 8; Psalm civ. 34; cxix. 15). The former hunts for something new, when weary of the old; the latter finds renewed life, strength, and refreshment from the old, which are never old to meditation. Truths from an infinite, all-wise God, they have in them more than the best meditative faculty can ever digest."

Let me ask you who read these pages, How do you treat "this book of the law"—these Scriptures which are given to make you "wise unto salvation" and "thoroughly furnished unto every good work"? Do you read it "day and night"? Do you endeavour to keep it in your mind, to hide it in your heart? Do you study it prayerfully, remembering that only the divine Author can enable you to understand it, and saying with David, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law"? Do you meditate therein—with the view of profiting thereby,—for the glory of God, for the advancement of your own spiritual life and for the edification of others?

Or, does the world drive out the word, does the daily newspaper receive more attention than the messages and words of love from the King of kings? does the gossip and frivolous talk of a perishing world efface the impression that the hasty morning reading, or the weekly hearing of God's Word, has made on your mind? If so, no wonder that you are weak, doubting, overcome of evil, inconsistent, and devoid of the joy of the Lord. You will never be anything but barren and unfruitful as long as you act thus. I beseech you to abandon such a course *at once*, *to-day*, *now*. Ask the Lord to enable you. Determine to honour His Word, to take it as your food, your rule of life, your "heritage for ever," and you will find that it is indeed with you as with one of old, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jer. xv. 16).

But further, the end for which the retention of, and meditation in, the law was enjoined on Joshua was *obedience* thereto. This was to be the practical result of remembering and considering the commandments of God, and it was only when this was attained that the former two processes were of any use.

It is needless to dwell here on the importance to Joshua as the leader of the people, the general of a large army, surrounded as he would be by false religion and heathen practices, of thorough

acquaintance with the law of God, and of unlimited and unhesitating obedience to its precepts. It was the only path of safety for himself and his nation; the only way in which he could bear testimony to the holiness and glory of God in the midst of idolatry; the only road in which success was promised in the gigantic conflict with evil in which Israel was about to engage. Obedience was the end for which the previous commands, "Remember," "Meditate," were given. Neither is it necessary to recall the substance of the previous chapter—viz., that service to God, obedience to His commandments, is the object of our redemption. That it is the pathway of blessing we shall see presently. I would only here dwell briefly on two points—that observance of the law is the end for which meditation in the law is enjoined, and that such observance is meant to extend to "all that is written" in the book of the law.

Just as retention of God's Word in the mind is useless without meditation thereon; so meditation is unprofitable unless it be followed by obedience. The analogy with earthly food still holds good. The digestion of the food which I receive is in order that it may furnish strength wherewith I may perform the necessary duties of life. And there is a need that we should bear this in mind. It is possible to be much occupied with the Scriptures, to search deeply, critically, and to some extent devoutly into their meaning, and arrive at

a perception, more or less clear, of their sense and connection, and yet to stop there. My intellect may be satisfied with obtaining a correct critical exposition, my ingenuity may be rewarded by harmonising difficult passages, and my heart receive nevertheless no renewal of strength from the occupation. I may, moreover, especially if called upon by my position to instruct others, think much upon Scripture in order to "divide rightly the word of truth" to those to whom I should minister it. I may feed them therewith, and yet my own spirit be unfertilised.

True, none of these come up to the true meaning of *meditation*, but they may be easily mistaken for it. And having, therefore, experience of this danger myself, and feeling it to be a subtle snare, I would utter a word of earnest warning to all engaged in the work of the Lord, in the honourable and blessed work of feeding others with the word of life. Father or mother, pastor or evangelist, Sunday-school teacher or city missionary, let me ask you, are you deriving profit yourself from the blessed truths you are constantly teaching to others? Whilst endeavouring to reach the consciences, to warm the hearts, and guide the lives of others, are you applying to yourself the doctrines and exhortations which pass through your mind and from your lips to their ears? Remember Balaam preached Christ without receiving Him. Saul, the determined enemy of the man

after God's own heart, was among the prophets. Judas cast out devils, healed the sick, and preached the gospel. Whilst there is a glorious privilege in having the gospel entrusted to you, a privilege angels have not, there is also a tremendous responsibility. See to it that you meditate for yourself, that you may observe to do all that is written in the book of the law in your own life, and bear in mind the words of the great Apostle, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. ix. 27).

Then, again, it is obedience to *all that is written* that is enjoined. Joshua was not to pick and choose the commandments that he liked, and to slur over those he disliked, or thought inappropriate or extreme. Neither may we. To begin to act thus would be to end by rejecting all Scripture. We cannot be the judges of what is best. The place of children, servants, or soldiers is not to question the appropriateness of commands, or to select those which please them, but to obey. Some particular doctrines may accord more with our own feelings than others; some commands may chime in with our wishes more than others: but such considerations are not to influence us. The only safe, the only happy, line is that of David's, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning *all things* to be right" (Ps. cxix. 128). The word of Mary to

the servants at Cana of Galilee is the word for us, "*Whatsoever He saith* unto you, do it."

Lastly, The *consequence* of remembering, meditating in, and obeying the Word of the Lord was to be *prosperity and success*, "Then shalt thou make thy way prosperous: then shalt thou have good success" (margin, "do wisely"). And so it is still. Oh, what blessings are promised to the obedient child—to the one who seeks to do his Father's will in the things which seem smallest, as well as in these that seem greatest. How full is the Scripture of descriptions of the joy, the peace, the prosperity, the success of those who walk in the ways of God.

Listen to Moses—"Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land whither ye go to possess it; and that ye may prolong your days in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give unto them, and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey." . . . "And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments, which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart, and with all your soul; that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain, and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle,

that thou mayest eat, and be full." . . . "For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to cleave unto Him; then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea, shall your coast be. There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you, and the dread of you, upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as He hath said unto you" (Deut. xi. 8, 25).

Listen to Elihu—"If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures" (Job. xxxvi. 11). What can any desire beyond this? "*Days of prosperity, years of pleasures.*" Is not this what all seek for; what the poor world toils for, but never finds?

Listen to Isaiah—"If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isa. i. 19).

But listen, lastly, not to law or prophets, but to the "beloved Son" Himself—"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest

myself to him." . . . "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John xiv. 21, 23).

Need we more than these? Yet the Bible is full of such declarations, and, thank God, there have been, and there are many, who can "set to their seal that God is true,"—that He does fulfil what He promises. Not to speak of Abraham, of Joseph, of David, of Daniel, look at that one instance in olden time, Moses, "the man of God," that "servant of the Lord," who was "faithful in all his house," and of whom it is said, no less than twenty-one times, that "he did as the Lord commanded." What marvellous communion did he not have! Of him God said, "With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold" (Num. xii. 8). Of him it is recorded, "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. xxxiv. 10).

And have not many in later days so walked in "the fear of God all the day long," that their characters, and almost their countenances, have shone like Moses', reflecting the glory of God in a dark world, and that those who have steadfastly looked on them have seen their faces, like Stephen's, "as the face of an angel." The vision of an in-

visible God,—growing likeness to "the God of glory,"—this is the "prosperity" every true Christian heart longs for. Then will he have also "good success," for "in the keeping of Thy commandments is great reward." Therefore, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

IV.

THE WARFARE OF FAITH.

"*Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in. And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.*"—JOSHUA vi. 1, 2.

WE have now arrived in our consideration of the Book of Joshua, as illustrating the position and life of the people of God in the place of blessing to which they have been brought through the union with the Lord Jesus Christ, at the following point. In the first place, we see them brought through the otherwise impassable barrier of the Jordan, or stream of judgment, by trust in the power of God,—as exhibited in the ark of the covenant,—sustaining the weight of the river until all were passed over. The judgment then for ever behind them, they come before us, their old life and character being buried under its waters as a people brought into a new country, which was

given to them for an inheritance, but which they were to appropriate, every inch of it, by the continually fresh exercise of faith in Him who promised that their enemies should melt away before them, and that every bit of the land which they claimed should be their own.

We have further seen that before the land could be appropriated and enjoyed, four important things were needful—first, the people must be separated from every taint of their old life,—the "sharp knives" must effect the circumcision which had been neglected in the wilderness life, and the "reproach of Egypt" be thus "rolled away;" the value and power of blood which saved and redeemed them must be brought vividly to their remembrance,—the passover must be kept in the plains of Jericho; the "light food" of the wilderness must be exchanged for the "strong meat" necessary for strength for their conflict,—the manna cease, and the "old corn of the land" begin; and, lastly, the "armies of the living God" must be placed under the leadership and command not of Joshua, but of "the captain of the Lord's Host." *

In the preceding chapters of this volume we have, moreover, seen the principles upon which the spiritual blessings of the land of promise can alone be enjoyed; they must be grasped by faith; the life of the people of God must be regulated

* This has been unfolded in "Heavenly Places."

and governed by that law which, though bereft of its power to condemn and slay the believer, is still the embodiment and manifestation of the will of God as regards the conduct of His children; and that law or word of God must be remembered, meditated upon, and obeyed.

These are, I believe, the unchangeable conditions on which the "good of the land" can be realised. There may be, it is true, many who, having been saved by faith in the precious blood of Christ, are truly and eternally "in Him," but who, by reason of carelessness, lack of faith, indolence, and, alas! direct disobedience, fail to come up to that enjoyment of "the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of Christ," which is the portion of all the family of God. They are like Israelites who were in the land of promise, but who either knew not its treasures, or cared not to explore them, or who shrank from that thorough obedience to the will of God, which was the only condition on which they could realise to the full the marvellous promises of earthly prosperity which were held out to them.

Such "come short" of the rest; they win no victories, they enjoy no peace; their life corresponds not to the ideal, but true life promised to the faithful servant of God; they soon fall under the power of the world, whether typified by Egypt or Babylon; and though, since "all Israel shall be saved," they may indeed finally not utterly perish,

it is a salvation "so as by fire;" an entering into life "maimed," not that abundant entrance promised to those who "go from strength to strength;" who, having "clean hands, wax stronger and stronger," daily grasping fresh promises, daily winning new victories, and who at last hear the blessed words, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

With such half-hearted, slothful followers, the portion of the book now under consideration is, with the exception of a short passage (which may perhaps be subsequently noticed), not concerned. Their character, conduct, and position is, I believe, exhibited in the "Reubenites, Gadites, and half tribe of Manasseh," referred to in the 1st chapter and 12th and following verses.

Our subject now is the onward progress and glorious victory of faith, and we have therefore before us, at the commencement of the 6th chapter, the people of God on the eve of possessing and enjoying the rich provision that lay before them, but confronted at the same moment with a tremendous obstacle. Jericho, strongly fortified, occupied by an enemy determined to resist Israel to the very utmost, stood in their way. Let us consider the teaching conveyed to us herein, taking the city of Jericho as the type of that which, though garrisoned by the enemies of God, is yet to become part of the inheritance of the Lord, and the army of Israel, as exhibiting the

attitude of those whom God sends forth to fight His battles and to subdue His enemies.

There are two aspects under which Jericho may be regarded, one as representing the power of the enemy, ruling in the world around us, against which the soldiers of Christ are called to draw the sword, and which they are to overcome in the strength of God; another, as representing the strongholds of sin which still exist even in the hearts of the redeemed, but against which an exterminating warfare is to be waged, and which are to be overcome and subdued in the same way. Although the latter application may be quite legitimate, and most useful to us all, it seems to me, from the analogy of the book as compared with the rest of Scripture, that the former is the primary interpretation. The book of Joshua corresponds, as I conceive, to the epistle to the Ephesians, and the entrance of the people upon the possession of all promised blessings in the "high places of the earth," foreshadows the position of those who are now, through union in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, entitled to the possession of "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him." The conflict against gigantic powers, the seven great and mighty nations in Canaan, answers, therefore, properly to the wrestling "against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in heavenly places," described in the 6th chapter of that

epistle, where it is not the inward struggle with indwelling sin that is the subject, but the outward contest with the god of this world, in which every servant of God engages, who understands and in any degree comes up to the realisation of his calling as a soldier of Christ. In this aspect, therefore, let us principally consider the narrative before us.

We find, then, that Jericho was part of the land which was called "the Lord's land;" that it was nevertheless under the dominion of the powers of evil; and that it was consequently in determined opposition to God.

It was part of the Lord's land; not only as a portion of the earth which He had created, but as a spot in that territory which He had specially marked out for His own dwelling and the manifestation of His glory. It must have been a peculiarly attractive place. It was called "the city of palm-trees," and we are told that the "situation of the city" was "pleasant." It lay within the confines of the country which, centuries before, God had promised to give to Abraham, and in which the father of the faithful, with Isaac and Jacob, "heirs with him of the same promise," had dwelt in tabernacles.

In the purpose of God, therefore, the place belonged to Him, and though long usurped and used as a situation for a stronghold of His enemies, where those dwelt who wrought iniquity, the time

had now come when the powers that had misused it were to be cast out, and the place become part and parcel of the inheritance of the Lord. The moment came when it was said to Joshua, "See, I have given into thine hands Jericho;" and henceforth it belonged to the people of God.

There are many such places—hearts, the throne of which is occupied by the god of this world, the strongholds of sin, but which, nevertheless, are given to Him who is the Captain of our salvation, and which are to become part of the garden of the Lord. Such there were at Corinth—hearts in which Satan ruled; "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners;" "children of disobedience," turning every gift of God, every natural power, every talent, every advantage, into opportunities and means for serving sin. But as one of the soldiers of Christ came to that place, armed with the sword of the Spirit, it was said unto him, "Speak, hold not thy peace—for I have *much people in this city.*" The attack was made in faith; the weapons, "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds," were wielded; the walls fell down in numerous hearts, for "many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized;" so that they who at one time could only be described by the terms used above, were then said to be "washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God." Henceforth

redeemed, delivered from the power of the usurper, the god of this world, they were God's inheritance, in whom He would dwell and be glorified.

Now, while we have no divine revelation given to us as to the particular individuals whom it is the purpose of God to bring into subjection to Himself, we know that it is still true, and will be true, until the number of the elect is accomplished, that He has "much people in this city," many Jerichos as it were; many hearts still under the dominion of sin and Satan, but which it is His purpose to subdue unto Himself; and the command having been given to those who are His servants to "preach the gospel to every creature," it is our part to regard all without distinction as those whom it may be God's good pleasure to deliver out of the hand of the enemy.

The heart of every unsaved one, of every one still ruled by the god of this world, is, or ought to be, to us a Jericho, against which we are to advance in the power of faith, knowing that God will make His word effectual to the salvation of all whom He has given unto His dear Son.

And whom are we entitled to except from this number? Of whom have we the right to say that he is beyond the reach of the gospel, the efficacy of the blood of Christ, the power of the Holy Ghost? Surely, of none. God has, no doubt, His own elect, "chosen in Christ before the foundation

of the world," but their names are not revealed unto us, and our marching orders are, "Preach the gospel to every creature." Should we not, therefore, see in all with whom we come in contact, who are not yet subject unto Christ, fortresses in which an usurper reigns, but which may become "cities of palm-trees," "pleasant for situation," the very dwelling-places of the Most High?

Surely, this is our place. And the men and women who have been most used of God, and, therefore, most successful in winning souls to Him, have been those who, however hardened, depraved, and ruled by Satan the hearts with which they have had to do may have been, have regarded them as citadels to be gotten for the Lord. If they have not won all, they have won many; and numbers, in whom the enemy reigned supreme, have been made temples of the Holy Ghost.

To all outward appearance, the assault upon such seems often a forlorn hope. Like Jericho, they appeared to be "walled up to Heaven." How are the soldiers of Christ, of whom "not many" are "mighty, not many wise," to capture such places? And when the attack is imminent, when close contact with the people of God cannot be prevented, how frequently do we find the policy in vogue at Jericho accurately repeated, "Jericho was straitly shut up; none went out, and none came in." A determined hostility, a studied reserve, a resolution to entrench themselves behind their works, their

prejudices, their hatred of God, and to have nothing to do with His servants, is frequently the line adopted. And under whose direction? "The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," is the counsellor on such occasions, and his directions are eagerly followed. The poor slave of sin, mistaking entirely the purposes of God towards him, imagines that to yield to Christ is to lose everything that makes life happy and enjoyable, and knowing that the demand is for an unconditional surrender, that no quarter will be shown to his sins, entrenches himself in his foolish walls, and determines to keep out God as long as possible.

Jericho must, indeed, surrender; everything *evil* in it must be purged out, the unbelieving powers within it must be exterminated; but it was in order that where sin had abounded, grace should much more abound, that it should become part of "Emmanuel's land," the inheritance of the God of Jacob. There blind eyes were hereafter to be opened, there that which was lost was to be saved (Luke xviii. 35; xix. 10). Sons of the prophets were to dwell there (2 Kings ii.), and the waters which had been so bitter were to be healed, so that there would be "from thence no more death or barren land" (2 Kings ii. 19, 21). This was God's purpose; this the enemy and his willing servants in the city were determined to resist.

But in vain, the fulness of the time had come;

the demands of grace, mingled, it is true, with judgment, were to be urged with irresistible power, and the kingdom of this world in that place was to become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ.

We thus see the character of the warfare which the "armies of the living God" are called upon to wage, the purpose which the Captain of their salvation has in view, and the encouragement which is given to them before even the battle begins.

It is a warfare with no insignificant enemy. We may, perhaps, hereafter see the danger into which the Israelites fell, and the defeat that overtook them when they underestimated the power of their opponents, and overrated their own strength. The enemies we have to contend with in fighting the Lord's battles, in endeavouring, whenever He calls us, to bring rebellious hearts into subjection to His gracious sway, are no weak or unskilful ones; "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. vi. 12). What a description of the hosts of evil! These are not mere kings of Jericho, sons of Anak, giants of an earthly Canaan, "principalities," "powers," "rulers of the darkness of this world," "wicked spirits in heavenly places" (margin). Their ruler is "the god of this world," "the prince of this world," "the prince of the power of the air," the spirit that now worketh "in the children of dis-

obedience." Mighty, subtle, experienced, diabolical, are the powers which garrison every heart which is not subject to the law of God. No artifice is unused, no labour is spared, to retain possession of them. If need be, as we learn from the story of the demoniac in Mark v., a "legion" of evil spirits can be employed to lead one human soul to destruction. The ferocity of the lion, the cunning of the serpent, the watchfulness of the fowls of the air, are all used to depict the character of those spirits which enslave the hearts of men, and "take them captive at (their) will." No attempt is too great for their devilish boldness, even the Son of God was tempted by their ruler; no stratagem is despised by them; the form of a serpent will be used to gain insidious access to the unsuspecting soul; their power is marvellous. "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light, and it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness." Oh, depend upon it, the powers of evil are indeed mighty! In them the fulness of the enmity against God are developed, and the "seven nations of Canaan, *greater and mightier*" than Israel, show to us that extraordinary combination of strength, subtlety, tenacity, persistency in evil, which characterise the mysterious powers, which, for reasons we cannot comprehend, have been permitted for a season to usurp and rule over part of the pleasant spots in the creation of God.

It is against such, believer in Christ, that as a

soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are enlisted to fight. Do not underrate the power of your enemies. The "murderer," the "liar," the "tempter," the "destroyer," are some of the names by which he is described to you. Better far to measure the length of his spear, the weight of his shield, his stature, and his strength, that you may be then led to distrust your own strength and wisdom, and "take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand in the evil day." By such tremendous powers, worker for Christ, are the hearts which you seek to win for your Master garrisoned; and they are more in earnest, if possible, to retain possession of them than the king of Jericho was to keep his pleasant city. Great pains have been taken to build up the walls of self righteousness and sin, even "up to heaven;"—the gates of the citadel are "straitly shut up," and prejudice and pride keep watch there continually; and if, perchance, some forerunner of the grace of God, some message of truth should penetrate for a moment, like the spies into Jericho, tidings instantly reach the ears of him who rules their hearts, and they are sought to be brought out and slain.

It were well if, in seeking to work for Christ, to advance into the enemy's country, to rescue the hearts around us from the slavery of sin, and to bring them into subjection to the Lord of hosts, we more clearly recognised the "power of the enemy." There would be less parleying with sin, there

would be more pains taken to seek out the smooth stones of the brook, and more sharpening of the sword of the Spirit. If we realised the tremendous might of the force arrayed against us, because against the God whom we serve, we should perceive more clearly our utter insufficiency for the contest, should be led to distrust our own wisdom, skill, eloquence—in fact, all our natural power—and should consequently be driven to look alone to God, to use only His weapons, and to rely wholly on His power.

It is nothing less than "all the power of the enemy" which is aroused against the gospel, for the god of this world knows well that the demands of Christ involve nothing short of entire surrender. If Christianity were content that Christ should take His place in the Pantheon with Jupiter and Mars, Bacchus and Apollo, there would be little, if any, resistance. But the ark of the Lord and Dagon cannot dwell together. Christ hath no concord with Belial; light hath no agreement with darkness; and, therefore, every effort which the malice and skill of hell can devise, and the natural heart of man adopt, will ever be exerted as soon as the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ comes into contact with the sinner. The "religion of the Jews," with its hardening self-righteousness, the "wisdom of the Greeks," with its contempt for the simplicity of the gospel, the "pleasures of sin," and "the fashion of this world," will all unite to shut up the citadel straitly; and against all these defences,

influencing the moral, mental, and physical parts of man's nature, deadening the conscience, blinding the mind, and gratifying the flesh, who is able to contend? None but those who "put no confidence in the flesh, and rejoice in Christ Jesus;" they alone who wield weapons which the world despises, and who wield them in the name and in the power of the living God, are sufficient to attack and overcome such strongholds; and their "sufficiency is of God."

What those weapons are, and how they are to be used, we may notice hereafter. Let us now proceed to observe the two-fold encouragement which God gives us in the prosecution of the warfare—viz., His *purpose* and His *promise*. It is a grand thing and a mighty help to know and understand the purpose of God in the work and war to which He has called His servants—the work of preaching the gospel; the war against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Whilst in one aspect the obedience of the Christian soldier must be an unhesitating, unquestioning, implicit obedience, it is, on the other hand, no unreasonable service in which he is engaged. Whilst the times and the seasons are hidden from us, we are yet admitted into the counsels of Him who sets the battle in array. He shows us the map of the enemy's country; He reveals to us the plan of the campaign; and He declares to us the purposes which He has in view.

This *purpose* is the expulsion of the evil that reigns, and the subjection of the heart wherein it reigned to Himself. It may be difficult at first sight to understand the wholesale destruction of the inhabitants of Canaan, which was to be carried out under the express command of God, but the reason is given us in the Bible. We find in the 18th chapter of Leviticus the description of the fearful sins of which they were guilty; iniquity so horrible, that, in the words of that chapter, "the land was defiled, and vomited out her inhabitants." As it was in the days that were before the flood, violence and vice had reached such a pitch that a God of long-suffering was at last compelled to say, "The end of all flesh is come before me, the earth is filled with violence, I will destroy them with the earth." For four hundred years and more the inhabitants of the land had been adding sin to sin. As long ago as that God had marked their ways, and how they were filling up the measure of their iniquity, and he said unto Abraham, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Four centuries were given to them by Him who is "slow to anger," "and not willing that any should perish." Four centuries of long-suffering had been abused, and now the cup was filled to the brim; their sins as well as their walls had "reached up to heaven," and the goodly land, the blessings of which they had so long perverted, was now to "spue them out," as irreclaimably, irremediably corrupt, as

those "whose end was destruction." The fair portion of God's earth which they had defiled was at last to be rid of their corrupting presence, and to be made the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.

As it was therefore in the days of the flood, and as it will be in "the end of the world," when "the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity," so it was in the day when the land of Canaan was to be purged; the ruling power of evil must be expelled and exterminated, that the country might become the dwelling-place of God on earth and the resting place of His people.

"Cast out devils" was the command to the twelve; "and He gave them power against unclean spirits to cast them out." "In my name shall ye cast out devils" was the promise that accompanied the final command of the Saviour to His apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature." They were to claim the world as the possession of the Most High; and wherever hearts were found "possessed of the devil," that power was to be expelled, its dominion taken away, and its dwelling-place to become the habitation of the Holy Ghost.

Such is the work still. Though not manifested exactly in the same way as in the days when evil

spirits possessed the bodies of men, the hearts of those who are not subject to Christ are equally under the power of the devil. He is, as we have seen, the "spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." He rules their wills, blinds their minds, enslaves their affections, deadens their consciences, and claims entire and undisputed possession of the whole man. "The strong man armed keepeth his palace." "Sin reigns."

But he is an usurper; the bodies, hearts, minds, and spirits over which he reigns are the creation and the property of another, and the "prince of this world" is to be "cast out." His sceptre is to be broken, his dominion to cease, and those over whom he has ruled are to become the subjects of our Lord and His Christ. True, this purpose may not in this dispensation be fully accomplished; there are and will be those who love darkness rather than light, and who, resisting the gracious operation of God's Spirit, choose death rather than life. For a time this may be so—yet only for a time; and while it is so, the duty of the servant of God is plain. As they know not the names of the elect, their business is to preach the gospel to every creature, to sound the gracious proclamation, "Whosoever will," far and wide, and to regard every human being as one in whom it may be the merciful purpose of the Lord to dethrone Satan, and to set up His kingdom.

The expulsion of the devil is then our work;

this is the conflict to which the soldiers of Christ are called; this is the object of the Captain of our salvation in sending us against the strongholds of vice, worldliness, and false religions. It is not the amendment of the life we are first to aim at; this is to come after. The weeds that cumber the soil must be rooted out before the good seed can be sown; the king of Jericho and his armies must be slain before the territory can become part of "Immanuel's land." It is not the toleration of the rule of evil side by side with holiness. God and mammon cannot reign together. The devil is to be expelled.

Brethren in Christ, I ask you, as I ask myself, Do we realise this aspect of our work? In preaching the gospel, in teaching the young, in endeavouring to reach the conscience and to claim the hearts of men for our Lord and Saviour, do we remember, as we should, that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. vi. 12). Do we bear in mind that beyond the natural enmity of the human heart, beyond the "carnal mind," which is "not subject to the law of God," there is the mighty power of the god of this world—subtle beyond human comprehension, and fertile in resources, binding the souls, as He did in olden times the body of the poor woman in the synagogue, so that they can "in no

wise lift themselves up—instilling false impressions concerning God and His Christ, as he did with Eve in the garden, when he led her to doubt God's word, and to distrust His love; as he did with the madman at Gadara, when he persuaded him that he who had crossed the lake amid the storm to heal and save him was "come to torment."

It is not merely outward reformation that is needed, or the amendment of manners, but the casting out and casting down of Satan, "the prince of the devils," from the throne of the heart; and it is not smooth words, or careless efforts, or the resources of human mind that will accomplish that result. "This kind goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting." Oh, let us estimate fairly "all the power of the enemy;" for then only shall we be in a proper condition to contend with him; then only shall we cease to put any confidence in the flesh, and look alone to the "stronger than he" for wisdom, strength, and victory.

The *promise*, however, the mighty promise of an Omnipotent Jehovah, is on our side. "See," He says, "I have given into thine hand Jericho and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour." It was therefore with the assurance that, although so straitly shut up, a way would be opened for them into the city, that, although so determined in its opposition, so mighty in its defences, and garrisoned by such mighty men of valour, the fortress

would shortly be vanquished and appropriated by the Israel of God, that Joshua and his armies advanced to the assault. The victory was theirs by the promise of God. They were already conquerors.

This was but the repetition at the exact moment of need of all the promises that had gone before, as they journeyed through the wilderness. Now was the moment when their reality was to be proved; and if, as they looked up at Jericho's walls, and surveying the mighty men of valour on the battlements, their spirits failed them when they thought of their own undisciplined hosts, from which "all the men of war" had died out, this was just the time when the assurance from the Captain of the Lord's host that victory was theirs was most reassuring and encouraging. Although to sense the attack was foolhardy, it was no forlorn hope to faith, for they who believed could say with truth, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The promise of victory must have nerved their hearts and strengthened their arms, and every step that they had to take in the attack must have been steadied by the knowledge that it was with the absolute certainty of success that they advanced. For what availed the mighty men of valour against an Almighty God? What could Jericho do to withstand Jehovah? If He who had broken Egypt's might, destroying their chosen cavalry, and overwhelming their king and their

captains in one night, was with them; if He, against whom neither the proud waves of the Red Sea, nor the rushing torrent of Jordan, could avail anything, was on their side; if He, before whom the mountains quaked and the rocks melted, was interposing on their behalf, then they might well look upon the fortress before them as vanquished.

And in the conflict with the powers of evil in these days the same promise is our strength and encouragement. Was it not this assurance that was given to those whom Jesus sent forth to undertake the apparently impossible task of casting out devils. "Behold," said He to the seventy, "I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and *over all the power of the enemy*" (Luke x. 19). And was it not in the confidence that the Captain of salvation would get himself the victory that Paul, sometimes single-handed, attacked the citadels of Greece and Rome? Though insufficient in himself, "in bodily presence weak, and in speech contemptible" (so at least his detractors said), he could say, "Now, thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." Athenian philosophy, Corinthian luxury and worldliness, Roman power, were alike overcome wherever God had those who were to be "delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son." The violence of

the Jewish priests, the wrath of Satan at Ephesus, his cunning at Philippi, the walls of dungeons, the fury of tempests were all alike powerless to hinder him till His work was done. "Fear not, Paul, I am with thee," was His encouragement, and therefore waving aloft the banner of the everlasting gospel, he advanced into the territories long ruled by Satan and sin, by the night of Paganism, and the pride of natural religiousness, winning glorious victories in prisons and in palaces, rescuing souls and bringing them to Christ.

He knew well that the counsel of the Lord must stand; that His word must accomplish that which He pleased, and must prosper in the thing whereto He sent it; and though man might mock, and rage, and turn away, He was sure that He, to whom all His works were known from the beginning of the world, would surely carry out His purposes, and would make His gospel effectual to bring every soul to Christ which had been given to Him in the everlasting covenant.

And this is our strength and encouragement still, believers in Christ, and fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God. The same Omnipotent Jehovah is on our side. Though our enemies are mighty, though superstition and infidelity still seem to rule, though Satan and sin yet have the upper place in the hearts of thousands, God is yet our "King, working salvation in the midst of the earth;" and

the word of Jesus is true, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." It is, therefore, no uncertain warfare in which we are engaged. God, who has "visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name," will not be defeated in His purpose. The number of the elect must be accomplished, and it is by the preaching of Christ to every creature that God is pleased to save them that believe.

"In much assurance," accordingly, we may assault the strongholds of sin; and though we may not know beforehand the precise individuals in whom the mighty power of God shall be manifested, we shall nevertheless be able to say as we look back, and see many an one in whom Satan reigned now the temple of the Holy Ghost, "Thou hast made of a city an heap, a defenced city to be a ruin, a palace of strangers to be no city;" "I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy name."

Let us then rejoice and take courage as we remember that it is with an enemy already in the purpose of God vanquished and overcome that we have to fight. The victory has already commenced. When the seventy came back to their Master with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name," He said unto them, "I beheld Satan like lightning fall from heaven." The rapidly approaching death of the Son of man was to "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;" and already, in anticipation,

the eye of "the prophet greater than Moses" saw the result of the conflict.

Again, on another occasion, he said, "Now is the prince of this world cast out," and once more, "The prince of this world is judged." "For ever settled in heaven," therefore, is the great purpose; the ruler of the darkness of this world—the power that has been permitted, for some wise reason not permitted to us at present to fathom, to rule so widely and so long over this fair spot in the creation of God, over the souls and bodies of many of God's creatures—is in the purpose and promise of Jehovah dethroned, judged, and sentenced. The victory, in its final completeness, has not yet taken place. The promise of Christ that the "God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly," yet awaits its fulfilment, as does the other promise to which the same speedy accomplishment is attached, "Behold, I come quickly." One is as certain as the other, and each has now its incipient fulfilment as stronghold after stronghold falls, as Satan loses the hearts over which he has ruled, and the minds which he has blinded, and as He "whose right it is" sets up His dominion in the cleansed and sanctified soul.

Soon, very soon—"yet a little while"—the full and final victory over the power of evil shall be won. He who was "manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil" will come forth to make "a short work" of destruction. Satan shall

first be bound a thousand years, and then,—after a little season, which will only serve to exhibit the hatred of God and man, which even that period in the bottomless pit has failed to change,—shall be cast into the lake of fire.

In the meanwhile, beloved brethren who read these pages, let us exhort one another to be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." He is on our side. Our enemy is His enemy, and that enemy is sentenced. Let us fight with no wavering in our ranks, no uncertainty in our hearts. "He giveth us the victory." Let us give God credit for being as mighty to pull down strongholds now as in the days of Jericho. A doubting heart wins few victories, but they must be won, and if we win them not, others will be called to fill our place. The want now is men, full of faith and the Holy Ghost, ready to lead forlorn hopes, knowing that nothing can stand before the power of God. Men like Jonah, who though once weak and faint-hearted, yet afterward stormed "that great city Nineveh" single handed, and brought it, by God's power—king, nobles, and people—to cry mightily unto God, and to turn from its evil way, so that it perished not.

But oh, remember it is only as you live in the promised land, judgment consciously behind you, "risen and seated with Christ in the heavenly places," that you can exercise this faith. It was not on the wrong side of Jordan that such victories

were won by Israel. It was only when Jonah knew what death, burial, and resurrection were in his own person that, as a man "alive from the dead," he became "a sign" as well as a preacher unto Nineveh.

Therefore, *abide* in Christ, *dwell* in the land; leave not the high places of conscious union with a risen Saviour, whence enemies, and towers, and walls appear very small, for the lower level of the world, the atmosphere of which always magnifies its ruling powers; and then you shall find in your work and warfare for Him who has called you to be a soldier of the cross, that you will be able to say, as one after another the hearts you seek to win yield themselves to Him, "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

V.

THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH.

"*The wall fell down flat.*"—JOSHUA vi. 20.

"*The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.*"—2 COR. x. 4.

"*God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.*"—1 COR. i. 27.

"*That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*"—2 COR. iv. 7.

WE now come to a consideration of the particular means which were made use of to overcome the power of the strong frontier fortress which barred the way of the children of Israel, as they stood upon the border of the land which God had promised to give them. The assurance of victory, it is true, was theirs already; they had the word of God for it that the city should be theirs; but it was now their duty to act upon the promise, to go forward in obedience to the command, and in the strength of faith to claim Jericho for the Lord of hosts; and we can easily see that the remarkable events that

signalised its fall were meant to exhibit to the people on this, the occasion of their first conflict in the promised land, the principles on which their warfare was to be conducted, and the power which —so long as they conformed to those principles— would be exerted on their side.

And whilst "these things happened unto them for ensamples, they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." If it was needful for them who wrestled against "flesh and blood" to give heed to the instruction thus conveyed to them, how much more necessary is it for us, who contend "against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places," to mark well the principles of the warfare in which we are engaged, and to learn the lessons which God has thus condescended to teach us. May we, therefore, have grace to discern the all-important truths which are conveyed in the incidents now before us.

Let us notice briefly, in the first place, that God prescribed the adoption of certain measures, the use of certain means, on the part of the Israelites. We may well conceive that if He had chosen, He need not have done so. He had given them the city, and it would have been doubtless as easy for Him to bring down its walls by the simple exercise of His power, without any action on the part of His people, as it was for

Him to create the world by a word, or to divide the waters of the Red Sea. But He did not do so. Whilst the power which broke down the fortress walls was all His own, He yet commanded certain steps to be taken by those whom He led against the city. He made use of means, and the adoption of them proved the faith, obedience, and patience of Israel.

The lesson to us is on the surface. It stands out not only here, but prominently, we may say, on almost every page of Scripture. God bids His servants work, He permits them to work with Him, and He does not, as a rule, work without their work. This is true, let us remember, of His servants, and of them alone. It is the principle on which He carries on His operations in the present dispensation; it applies to *service*, not salvation. In the work of *salvation*, no co-operation was demanded, none could have been effectual. In the great transaction of accomplishing the salvation of His people, the mighty worker said, "Of the people there was none with me." He finished that work alone; and no human effort is needed on the part of the sinner to make that work effectual to the salvation of his own soul. "To him that worketh not but believeth" is the principle on which salvation is imparted. The sinner has but to accept Jesus, to trust in Him and in what He has done for him, to rely on His word, to rest in His salvation. If a hand has to be stretched out, it must be an empty one—

"*Nothing* in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling."

No weapon must be there, no works performed. Faith's hand is an empty one, and must be empty to receive God's gift—His Son Jesus Christ. There is no working with God for our own salvation.* We must "let that alone for ever" (Ps. xlix. 8, Prayer Book version).

But it may be said, Is it not in the use of the means of grace that salvation is to be found? Are we not told to use such means? I reply, Christ is the only means of grace, the only channel through which grace flows from God to sinners, and the only means by which grace can be received. It is true that prayer, the hearing and reading of God's Word, are often called means of grace, and no doubt the soul must know about Christ either by hearing or reading before it can believe (for "how shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard?"), and prayer is the expression of the soul's need to God; but prayers may be uttered, and the Word heard and read, without grace being received into the heart. *Christ* must be laid hold of, received, apprehended; through Him God speaks to us, by Him we draw nigh to God. Christ is the only real means of grace, and as He may be

* There is the "*working out* our own salvation," but this is not working *for* salvation. It is the working of one *in whom* "God works to will and to do"—of one, therefore, who is already saved, and in whom God dwells and operates.

believed on and received as soon as His voice is heard and His message understood, there is no need for the long use of so-called means of grace in order to receive Him in whom is salvation.

For the soul that has found grace, and is consequently alive unto God, prayer, praise, and the reception of God's Word, is as needful to maintain health and strength as breathing and the partaking of food are necessary for the health of the body, and it is in the use of such means that the heart has communion with God. And in the same way the right use of the ordinances of Christ are strengthening to the soul, for they are remembrances of Him; but it is only after He himself, the great fountain of living waters, has been received, that the lesser rills can be of real profit.

In speaking, therefore, of the use of means now, I am referring to the part which He enjoins on His own people and permits them to undertake; not for the saving of their own souls, but for the work which He is carrying on for the saving of others, the destruction of the kingdom of Satan, and the deliverance of the captives from his power. As in the kingdom of nature, so in the kingdom of grace. The same God who does not give the harvest without man's toil, though it is produced by His power, who ordains that the treasures of earth and sea and air shall only be realised by the diligence of man, though already given to him for a posses-

sion, has seen fit to make use of human hands to sow the word of the kingdom and to reap the harvest, of human voices to preach His truth, and of human hearts through which the rivers of living waters are to flow to enrich the parched lands around them. Human hands must roll away the stone from the grave of Lazarus, must "loose him and let him go," must distribute the bread to the hungry multitudes; and though the Lord of life and power could, if He chose, have as easily wrought the work without them, He was pleased to use them; thus showing that His servants are privileged to work with Him in the great business of liberating captive souls and satisfying empty hearts.

It is thus a principle in the kingdom of God that the results which He purposes to accomplish in gathering out a people to His name and completing the body of Christ, shall, as a rule, be accomplished by divine power working through human, and therefore weak, instruments. Whilst, therefore, we know that He has given a people to His Son for an inheritance, and that every one thus given "shall come" to Him, we are not to abandon human effort for the conversion of our fellow-sinners on the plea that if they are to be saved they will be saved, but, thankfully acknowledging the gracious purpose of our Father in permitting us to be the instruments in His hands of winning souls to Christ, we are to go forward,

using the means that He has been pleased to ordain, knowing that the "power belongeth unto God," but that to us it belongeth to preach the Gospel to every creature.

Though Jericho's walls were most certainly to fall, the result was to be attained when Israel took the steps prescribed by Him who was leading them to victory, and not by their sitting idly in their camp, waiting for God to put forth His power. Such conduct would have the fruit not of faith, but of presumption? God uses human means to enlarge His kingdom on earth, and to bring down the "fortress of the high walls," while all the glory of the victory belongs to Him and Him alone.

What, then, were the means used?

It appears to me that they may be particularised as follows: the exhibition of the ark of the covenant; the blowing of the trumpets; the shout of the people; their faith and patience. And these may serve, as I believe they are intended to serve, the purpose of teaching us important lessons for the conduct of the warfare, the tremendous character of which we have in some measure considered in the previous chapter.

The first and foremost, then, was the exhibition of the ark of the covenant. That ark was the scene and symbol of God's presence with His people, enshrined in the "holy of holies." It was the centre of the tabernacle; all the worship of the priests

and people had its object there. From between the cherubims there shone forth the rays of glory, the Shekinah, and He who thus displayed a portion of His brightness was addressed as, "O thou that dwellest between the cherubims." But, as I have endeavoured to show briefly in a previous volume, the ark in an especial manner typified and foreshadowed the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose person God would be manifested; the two materials, wood and gold, representing the human and divine nature of "Immanuel—God with us;" the unbroken tables of the law, deposited in the ark, foreshadowing that perfect fulfilment of the law by Him who could say, "I delight to do Thy will; yea, Thy law is within my heart," and the mercy-seat or propitiatory, of which Jehovah said, "There will I meet with you, and commune with you," exhibiting the Saviour who has been "set forth as a propitiation* through faith in His blood," and who is the only meeting-place between sinners and a God of holiness.

The ark, moreover, was the continual manifestation of an atonement made by sacrifice. Year by year, as they travelled through the wilderness, the golden mercy-seat had been sprinkled with the blood of atonement, and that which completely covered the condemning law, and on which the

* The word translated "propitiation" in Rom. iii. 25, and there applied to Christ, is the same as that used in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament for the "mercy-seat," and it is that version from which all the quotations in the New Testament are made.

glory of Jehovah was displayed, bore indelible crimson stains, which told of the law vindicated, peace made, and forgiveness bestowed.

It was this ark thus sprinkled with blood which, borne on the priests' shoulders, met and sustained the overwhelming weight of the waters of Jordan or "stream of judgment," and thus opened a safe and easy way for the people into the promised land; and we are especially told that it was at the presence of the God of Jacob that the Jordan was "driven back" (Ps. cxiv. 5-7). And who was it but Christ—God "manifest in the flesh"—who, in the fulness of His priestly power, went down into the dark waters of judgment, alone bore that weight that must have destroyed every one, and thus made "a way through the depths for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over;" and "when He had overcome the sharpness of death, opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

Jesus Christ, then, is the true ark—in him God has been and is manifested; through Him the glory shines forth to us; He is "the propitiation for our sins," the meeting-place with a holy God. He is the continual witness of an atonement made and accepted—an atonement which exactly meets and fully covers the demand of the law; an atonement on the ground of which a God of infinite holiness can meet with and reveal Himself to sinful men. He has borne our judgment; from Him death recoiled, vanquished. He is "the power of God." It

is by His enduring the weight of judgment in our stead that we are delivered; it is by the lifting up and exhibition of Him, a crucified but exalted Saviour, that the towers still fall, and the citadels of Satan become the dwelling-places of the Spirit.

The attack upon Jericho was thus arranged. "All the men of war" went in front; seven priests, blowing trumpets of rams' horns, came next; then the ark, borne upon the shoulders of the Levites, and then the remainder of the host closed the procession. Thus, as we read, they compassed the city six days. Once each day they marched round the city; no sword was drawn, no words were spoken; the white-robed priests blew with the insignificant-looking trumpets of rams' horns; in the centre of the whole was an object covered with a cloth of blue on men's shoulders, and the mass of the nation followed. A more extraordinary method of attacking a great fortress was surely never devised; and we can well imagine how strange it must have appeared to the garrison of Jericho, and what mockery and taunts it must have aroused.

As day after day the curious procession marched round the town, and day after day closed without any assault, as they saw the armed men return into the camp, they must have said, as enemies of God said in a later day, "What do these feeble Jews?" "Will they make an end in a day?" What absurdity is this? And one would

almost think that they must have been inclined, as each day's apparently ineffectual march ended in inaction, to leave their fortifications and sally forth against an enemy who could do nothing more than march about, and blow useless blasts with little rams' horns. And yet, perhaps, some awe fell upon them; they knew that that strange-looking cloth of blue covered an object which had hurled back the rushing torrent of the Jordan for miles; that the people that marched round the city were guided and accompanied by a mighty power, which had "broken Egypt in pieces" and "divided the Red Sea in parts," and they may have regarded with undefined alarm the mysterious procession around their walls.

But be that as it may, with whatever feelings, whether of ridicule or terror, they watched the proceedings of Israel, and listened to the sound of the trumpets, for six days the same sight was seen, the same sound heard; and the seventh day at last dawned, when an earlier stir was observed in the camp of Israel, when, instead of once only, the procession wound seven times round the walls of the city, and the same apparently monotonous blast was repeated during each circuit.

At last the word of command was given by Joshua. As the seventh circuit was completed, the strict silence hitherto enjoined, and only interrupted by the sound of the rams' horns was broken; and "it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, that

Joshua said unto the people, Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city. So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets; and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat." Jericho sank into ruins. The blast of the trumpets, the great shout were Israel's; the excellency of the power was of God. Man used the prescribed means; God put forth the promised might; the result was accomplished. The means may have seemed utterly inadequate; but He who can use a "worm" to "thresh the mountains," and who chooses the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, used the apparently useless daily procession of priests with ark and trumpets and the shout of the people to bring down the pride of Jericho and lay its towers in the dust.*

And such is God's method still. Means which to the world seem ridiculous and utterly inadequate are the plan which He adopts to accomplish His purposes of grace. The uplifting and exhibition of a crucified Saviour—the preaching of the blood of

* The collective action of priests, men of war, and people in the work beautifully exhibits the union in the effort to extend the kingdom of God, which is the privilege, and should be the characteristic of all His people. Not that some are priests, while others are common people—*all* are "a royal priesthood, an holy nation" (1 Pet. ii. 9)—all are called to be "soldiers of Christ;" but all do not apprehend their privileges or understand their high calling and position. Some only know themselves to be amongst God's people, others

the cross, "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness"—the feeble breath of an obscure band of pilgrims, not flowing melodiously through silver trumpets, but giving a perhaps harsh and discordant sound, through paltry rams' horns —such are the instrumentalities which the Lord of hosts is pleased to use, and which are "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Was it not always so? Has He not ever "chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise," and the "weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty?" Yes, indeed, "base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." That is, He chooses instruments which the world in its fancied wisdom counts "foolish, "base," "weak," "despised," things which, it may be true, have no inherent excellency of their own, no power, no might,

recognise themselves to be also soldiers; while others again understand that, as brethren of the Great High Priest, sprinkled with the blood and anointed with the oil, they are also priests unto God. But whatever their degree of spiritual intelligence, all may unite, according to their capacity, in the great battle under the Captain of salvation; and every believer in Christ unites in himself the position, and may discharge the functions, of priest, warrior, and child of God.

but which He makes mighty by letting omnipotence flow through them.

All His dealings prove this to be His way. And why is it His way? "That no flesh should glory in His presence"—that all the power should be seen and acknowledged to be His, strength ascribed unto God, and the glory due unto His name be given to Him.

Trace a few of His works. What was the weapon that "divided the sea whose waves roared?" A rod in Moses' hand. What instrument slew a thousand Philistines? The jaw-bone of an ass. What healed the dying Israelites? A serpent on a pole. What overcame the giant's strength? A smooth stone from a shepherd's sling.

"Ways seeming base and weak
A God of might will try;
Such ways His presence speak,
And tell His arm is nigh:
His finger in the work is shown,
And glory springs to God alone.

"When sons of earth surround
A hostile city strong,
The cannon tear the ground,
The trenches creep along;
But when the Lord attacks a town,
With foolish horns He blows it down."*

And as in Old Testament, so in New Testament times. Who were the men chosen to attack the

* Berridge.

high walls of Jewish self-righteousness, Grecian wisdom, and Roman power; to dethrone Paganism in its stronghold, and claim the world for the Lord? A band of fishermen from the shores of a Syrian lake, "unlearned and ignorant" men, the "poor of this world," boasting, with one exception, no college education; and that one confessed that when He came to the place where worldly luxury and intellectual refinement reigned, he "came not with excellency of speech or of man's wisdom." Athenians called him "a babbler," and Corinthian adversaries asserted him to be "in presence weak, and in speech contemptible."

Yet the trumpet blown by these men and their companions shook the world. Their enemies called them "the men that have turned the world upside down." Their preaching of the cross was mighty to subdue hearts within dungeons, and to make kings tremble on their thrones. "There was war in heaven; and the dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not." The sound of the gospel went out into all lands, the bulwarks of Satan and sin fell in many and many a heart, and nations became obedient to the faith. The handful of despised Galileans "through faith subdued kingdoms;" a dying and risen Saviour preached and lifted up, brought into contact with heathen fortresses, with hearts where Satan reigned, proved to be the power of God unto salvation.

And so it is still. Our "weapons are mighty

through God." Though the treasure be in but "earthen vessels," yet, as the lamp shining forth from the broken pitchers of Gideon's three hundred, and the sound of the trumpets which they blew, struck dismay into the host of the Midianites, so the word of the Lord avails still to scatter the power of the enemy, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, the crucified, brings to nought the barriers of sin.

The "wise," the "mighty," the "noble" may still despise the apparently feeble efforts of those who are fighting the battles of the Lord. "Jews" may yet "require a sign," and "Greeks seek after wisdom." We must content ourselves with, and glory in, the preaching of the cross. While this dispensation lasts, as long as the glory of God is a glory only seen by faith, Jesus, "the Lord of glory," will still be as "a root out of dry ground," having "no form or comeliness" in the eyes of the world at large; and they who preach Him, and Him alone, as the power of God unto salvation, may be content to bear His reproach, and be counted fools, fanatics, enthusiasts, madmen.

In these days of enlightenment, civilisation, and philosophy (falsely so called), evangelical preaching may be looked down upon; and the world at large that calls itself Christian, and cannot do without a religion, either as a test of respectability, or as a salve to the conscience, may call for teachings more adapted to the requirements of an age that

boasts of its advanced knowledge, and many who know not that Christ crucified is the only power for the demolition of the stronghold of Satan, and the deliverance of the lost sinner, may seek by a sensuous ritual, by music that pleases the ear, vestments and outward exhibitions that catch the eye, and discourses that gratify the intellect without probing or meeting the wants of the heart, to commend Christianity in the world. But it is the business and glory of true servants to exalt Christ, and Christ crucified alone. "Enticing words of man's wisdom" and "excellence of speech," though God may sometimes make use of them—nay, often does use the gifts of intellect and tongue which He has bestowed—are not the secret of power. "Jesus only" must be their motto and their theme, or their labour will be in vain.

Therefore, brethren in Christ, fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, take courage! Though numbers may despise your frequent repetition of "the old, old story," preach nothing else. There is no real monotony in the story of the cross; preach Christ, and let all your teaching radiate from, and centre in Him. All the Scriptures testify of Him. You never can exhaust the fulness that is in Him. There is enough in Him to meet the wants of the lowest and the worst; there is variety enough in Him to satisfy every fresh want of the soul that has already known Him as a Saviour.

Tract distribution, open-air preaching, will never be fashionable; the mighty men of Jericho will ever despise the insignificant tract, and the sounds of the gospel apparently scattered to the winds. But by these means, which the world calls foolish, God is glorified; for the Christ you testify of is "the wisdom of God, and the power of God."

Remember, moreover, that as it was by the daily and continued manifestation of the ark in the repeated walk around Jericho that God was pleased to exercise His power, so it is now. It is not only by the testimony of the lips, the sound of the trumpet, but by the testimony of the life, the *daily walk*, the "conversation" of the servant of God, joined to the proclamation of the truth by word of mouth, that the great victories are won.

"*Always bearing about* in the body *the dying* of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body," was the secret of success of the great apostle, and it is the secret of success still. The steady walk of faith, the dying daily, the identification with a crucified Lord, the losing of our own life, and thus "the bearing about the dying of the Lord Jesus": this is the way of victory which the world understands not. Life and power are only through death; "the corn of wheat"—symbol of Christ and of all His people—must still "fall into the ground and die," if it is to bring forth much fruit.

But work and walk *in faith*. The ark was

carried round Jericho in faith, the trumpets were blown in faith, the great shout was given in faith; for we read, "By *faith* the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days" (Heb. xi. 30). Joshua, the priests, the men of war, and the people, believed God, and trusted in His power. Therefore they acted as they did; it was a shout of triumphant faith that burst from the hosts of Israel. They did not wait to see God's power exerted before they would shout; they did not hesitate, thinking that perhaps after all nothing would happen if they did shout, and that they would only cover themselves with shame and ridicule if no result followed. They were "strong in faith, giving glory to God;" and according to their faith, so it was unto them. "By *faith* the walls of Jericho fell down."

This was the secret of the great victory; and without this the procession, the lifting up and carrying about the ark, the blasts from the trumpets, the great shout, would all have been useless. And this is the only way to win victories still. If we expect to see no results follow, we shall see none; it is when we "believe," that we "see the glory of God." The power of God is not the less, but it is the law of His kingdom, the plan on which He is pleased to act, that this power shall be put forth in proportion to the faith of His servants; and where there is distrust and doubt He does not work, or if He does in His gracious

sovereignty, the exercise of which, in one sense, "tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men," it is but a little that is accomplished compared with the results that a large, strong faith would ensure.

We read of one place, "He could do there no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them" (Mark vi. 5), and what was the reason? "He did not many mighty works there because of their *unbelief*" (Matt. xiii. 58). The working of God's power is restrained by doubt; as long as faith brings empty vessels to be filled, the oil flows on; when there is no more receptivity, the oil stops. If the King of Israel had smitten five or six times on the ground with the arrows, he should have smitten Syria till he had consumed it; but he smote but thrice and stayed, and he was to smite Syria but thrice (2 Kings xiii. 18, 19).

The fight in which the armies of God are engaged is essentially the "fight of faith." It is one carried on, not by human energy, but by trust in divine power; its success is dependent, not on the strength of man's arm, but on that of the almighty "arm of the Lord," of which faith lays hold. Of every triumphant conflict the record is true, "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them;" and therefore the expression of the be-

liever's resolution is, "I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me; through *Thee* will we push down our enemies; through Thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us" (Ps. xliv. 3, 5, 6).

While the diligent and proper use of the prescribed weapons is incumbent on the soldiers of Christ, the Captain of their salvation stands in no need of their strength. They lift up a rod over the roaring waves, He blows with His wind, the sea covers their enemies (see Exod. xv. 10). They marched round the walls, and gave a shout, but "*His* right hand, and *His* holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory." Therefore it is entirely by trust in an unseen but omnipotent God that all victories are won. It was "through faith," and by no human energy, that God's servants in olden times "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." They trusted and were not disappointed. It was with the triumphant song of believing praise that Jehoshaphat and his army advanced to meet the "great multitude" that came against them, saying, at the same time, "We have no might against this great company," and their faith was not in vain. "The Lord set ambushments" against the enemy, and "none escaped" (2 Chron. xx).

It was in this faith in the power of God that the little band, commissioned to overthrow the kingdom of Satan, advanced in later days. They had no skill, or power, or wisdom; they wielded weapons which, to the judgment of the men of this world, whether Jews or Greeks, were utterly useless; they told a tale concerning "one Jesus," which had been crucified, and announcing pardon through Him whom "man despised and the nation abhorred," they commanded all to repent and believe in Him. But, unlikely as the instrumentality seemed to touch the heart or change the life, the men who used it knew that God had chosen and ordained "the foolishness of preaching" to save them that believed, and that "there was the hiding of His power;" that just as in the ark carried round Jericho was manifested the omnipotence that overcame every obstacle, so in the story of the love of God in Christ there was a might, when preached in demonstration of the Spirit, which no walls of pride or sin could withstand; they were not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; they believed in God; and with the shout of victory they went forward to the battle.

And were they disappointed? No. It may be that many resisted the Holy Ghost, and that those who were brought "into captivity to the obedience of Christ" were far less numerous than those who remained in their enmity to Him. But the servants of God knew well that the pur-

poses of their Master could not fail to be accomplished; that wherever there were hearts which He marked out from all eternity as destined to be His dwelling-place, the gospel must take effect; and therefore they could not be disappointed, their faith could not be shaken. "In much assurance" they preached the Word, and many became "obedient to the faith."

And it is the men who, in full reliance that God will honour His word, keep His promise, and accomplish His purpose of salvation, have gone forth with no weapon but the "gospel of the everlasting God," who have in all ages "subdued kingdoms, obtained promises, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Weak in numbers, but strong in faith, they preached Christ, and the strongholds fell.

Brethren in the Lord, fellow-soldiers of Christ, herein lies our strength still. The power of God becomes ours by trusting in Him for it, and our business, whatever men may think of us, is to go forward, lifting up Him who has said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Sounding forth, though it be through such unworthy and unfashionable instruments as rams' horns—the weak things of this world,—the glorious proclamation of the love of God; uniting, as one man, in the shout of triumph, even before the final victory is won; believing that God will send forth the mighty power of the Holy Ghost while we work and preach,

and that the citadels of self-righteousness, vice, sin, worldliness, and Satan shall then become the "kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ."

Lastly, work in *patience.* Faith and patience go together; we are to "be followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises." While faith expects the blessing, it must yet wait the appointed time, and that time is not always, nay, not often, known to us. That there is an appointed time for each heart to yield to Christ, that there is a moment fixed from all eternity when the last opposing power shall be brought down, and the final purposes of God be accomplished, we know well, but when that time is is not revealed.

The conviction that there is such a moment encourages faith, the uncertainty as to its exact period is meant to produce patience, and while we work in faith and fight in faith, expecting that "the Lord will do great things," we are to work and fight in patience, leaving the time in His hands.

Do we not learn this from the incident before us? "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, *after they were compassed about seven days.*" The number seven, as we learn from many passages of Scripture, is constantly used to describe anything to which the idea of fulness or completeness is attached. The seven days which the Israelites were to compass the city of Jericho was therefore the period during which the patience of the people was to be exercised, and at the end of which, their

patience having had its "perfect work," their faith was to receive the accomplishment of the promise. It would, of course, have been as easy for God to accomplish the purposed result in one day as in seven, but by the latter period faith and patience were both tested.*

But few words are needed here. The lesson is taught us again and again, at "sundry times" and in "divers manners." None of the great results which need Omnipotence itself to produce them are accomplished without patience on the part of the human instruments which are employed by divine wisdom in the process by which they are wrought out. Does faith expect that the insignificant seed which is cast into the ground, covered over and abandoned, shall, by the exercise of an unseen but almighty power, spring up into luxuriant life, and "yield seed to the sower and bread to the eater?" Then patience also tarries the appointed time, for, "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." And the patience does not contradict the faith, and the faith would be incomplete in its operation without the patience. Such a period of waiting is appointed, before which it is not the will of God that the harvest should be gathered; it would not be faith but presumption to expect it earlier; and the patience which was not preceded by the sowing,

* Compare 1 Sam. 8, and xiii. 8.

which is the exercise of faith—faith in action—would be a hopeless and fruitless waiting. So the faith and the patience work together.

And thus is it also in spiritual warfare and spiritual husbandry. As it was needful that the seven days should elapse before Jericho's walls were to fall, as days and nights and months must pass before the seed can be quickened, and grow, and blossom, and bear its ripened fruit, so has God ordained that the soldier of Jesus Christ shall fight the good fight of faith in patient waiting for the moment of victory; and that the labourer in the great harvest field shall tarry in trustful expectation till the seed of the Word shall bring forth its fruit in the conversion and salvation of the souls in which it has been sown.

We are sometimes apt to forget this and to be disheartened, because the great results which we long for and expect do not immediately follow. Not that I would for a moment discourage the greatest expectations of present victory. Our expectations are not half, not a thousandth part, large enough. Few go forth with the shout of faith, looking for the walls of Satan's power to come down with a crash, and few therefore see such glorious results. But, at the same time, let us not lose sight of the fact that God alone knows the exact moment when His word shall triumph over the power of the enemy in this or that soul. The seven days that elapsed before the first blast with

the rams' horns and the final shout that rent the air, did not make the result one whit less certain. The promise of the God that cannot lie held just as good as though the walls had fallen on the first day, and each passing minute brought the hour of victory nearer.

God's delays are not denials. When Abraham had got the promise of God he believed it, though years intervened between its utterance and its accomplishment; but "after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." And it is no less our part and our privilege to wait God's time, not in faithless despair, but in patient hope, using the means, clinging to the promise, looking for the fulfilment at the moment when He sees best to give the blessing which He has bid us expect. Therefore, "let patience have her perfect work." True faith can still say, "My times are in Thy hand;" and it is still "good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord;"* for "he that believeth shall not make haste."

* This passage affords no warrant for that faithless waiting of the unconverted heart, which argues that it is useless to seek the Lord, because the time and working of salvation are in His hand. God's command to "all men everywhere is to repent *now*" (Acts xvii. 30); and He gives no promise of salvation at any other moment than the present,—"while it is called *to-day*." The teaching of the above Scripture is that believers in trial should quietly wait the time of God's deliverance; and it applies similarly to those who are working for Him in His vineyard.

Do these pages come under the eyes of those who are earnestly longing to see the fruit of their labour in the conversion of those before whom they have set the gospel, and in whose hearts they daily hope to see the pulling down of strongholds and submission to the righteousness of God? Be not discouraged. Are you a preacher of the word, a Sunday-school teacher, a tract distributor, a visitor to the sick, a parent, a husband, a wife or child seeking the establishment of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus in the hearts of those near or dear to you? Remember the seven days round Jericho. This is "written for our learning, that we, through *patience* and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." Use the means, the daily exhibition of Jesus in your *walk*, the daily testimony to Jesus with your *lips;* expect the putting forth of the power of God, and the seventh day shall assuredly come. He who gives the temporal harvest "to the just and the unjust" will hear the cry and bless the believing labours of "His own elect," the Israel of God, though He may try the faith which He himself has given. Soon "the fortress of the high fort of the walls shall He bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust," and the song of triumphant praise shall burst from your lips, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The promise is still true. "*In due season* we shall reap if we faint not, and the command still

runs thus, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after *many days*." Be not disheartened because, in the exercise of perfect wisdom, God tarries and your faith is tried; let not your faith fail because enemies scoff, and the opposition seems as determined and strong on the very morning, nay, on the afternoon of the seventh day, as it was when you first began your work. Run the race that is set before you "with patience, looking unto Jesus;" never mind though, like the Israelites, you go over the old ground day after day, and even seven times in one day. The Captain of your salvation cannot be defeated in the end; the counsel of the Lord shall stand. He declares, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." The towers shall speedily fall, and you shall see many a fair spot of ground, once Satan's seat, the possession of Immanuel, the Prince of Peace, a place "pleasant for situation," where fruits of righteousness shall grow to the praise and glory of God.

But one word more. There is a second but important aspect in which the victory over Jericho may be regarded, if we consider it as representing not only the triumph of the soldiers of Christ over the power that stops the progress of the gospel in the world, but also the conquest of those inward strongholds in the believer's own

heart, of the existence of which each child of God is painfully conscious.

For there are "high things that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God," still in the recesses of the heart where Jesus is nevertheless loved and worshipped. Day by day, it may be, increasing light reveals the pride, self-will, and various forms of sin that lurk in the corners of the heart, and every believer is fully aware that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit," that there is a tendency in the old nature to reassert itself, and to rebel against the law of God.

There is thus an inward warfare, on which I will not dwell, for the successful prosecution of which the same means are alone of any avail which are used in the outward conflict. There are victories to be won in secret, where no eye of man can pierce and no voice of man applaud, far more glorious than the most exalted triumphs which earthly kings and commanders ever gained, "for He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." The same means are prescribed. Christ crucified and exalted must by faith be brought to bear upon the opposition, whatever form it may assume; Christ, "the power of God," is the only power by which self and sin can be brought low, even to the dust.

Let us then bring Him, as we may, into every conflict—great and small. It may be against the world in Egypt, the flesh in the wilderness, or the

devil in "heavenly places" that we have to fight. The same power is always available; and in that inward struggle with "fleshly lusts that war against the soul," we may rely on the promise, "They that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought, for the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will keep thee." Though absent in body, He is with us "for ever" by His Spirit, "the Holy Ghost, the Comforter," and "He is *able* to subdue *all things* unto Himself." Let us use the almighty power thus bestowed, and if used in "faith and patience," we shall find that inward as well as outward victories are won, and shall be able to say, "Now, thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ."

VI.

DESTRUCTION WITHOUT FAITH.

"*The wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.*"—Col. iii. 6.

"*They utterly destroyed all that were in the city.*"
—Joshua vi. 21.

We may properly, in the light which the epistle to the Ephesians throws upon the book of Joshua, take Jericho in its collective aspect as a type of the kingdom of this world, ruled over by the enemy of God and His people, the place where the principalities and powers resist to the last, and contest every inch of ground with Him to whom it all by right of creation and redemption belongs; and, at the same time, as a type or picture of the individual heart where Satan reigns, until its defences are overthrown by the power of the gospel, and which then becomes part of the garden of the Lord.

But these views of Jericho do not exhaust the lessons which it contains. Besides its collective character as a city, the individuals of which the city was composed are presented to us in Scripture

as exhibiting the characteristic of those who finally perish—namely, *unbelief*. For we read, "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that *believed not*" (Heb. xi. 31); and thus, while Rahab is adduced as a striking instance of a sinner saved by faith, her fellow-townsmen are, on the other hand, described as "they that believed not," and who therefore "perished."

Their character, as finally impenitent and unbelieving, and their fate of utter destruction, become, therefore, most deeply solemn and important when viewed as the foreshadowing in Old Testament picture of those who, because they "know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when He shall come," the seventh and last trump proclaiming that the day of grace is ended; and when the "shout" and "the voice of the archangel," louder ten thousand times than the shout at which the walls of Jericho fell, shall proclaim that all resistance is fruitless, that the Lord God Almighty has taken to Him His great power and reigned, that His "wrath is come, and the time to destroy them that destroy the earth."

It is the more important not to overlook this aspect of the destruction of Jericho, since it has now become a common thing, as it was prophesied it would become, to question the reality of a

judgment to come, to assert the inconsistency of the everlasting destruction of the ungodly with the character of a God of love and mercy, and even to scoff at the announcement of the return of the Lord Jesus "to execute judgment upon all."

Not that these solemn truths rest for their credibility upon the typical character of the fate that befell the inhabitants of Jericho. History and prophecy, parable and type, promises and threatenings combine to set them forth. They are conspicuous in law, psalms, and prophets. Moses and Christ, law and gospel, equally declare them. The deluged "world of the ungodly," the burned cities of the plain, the destruction of Egypt, Babylon, Nineveh, and Jerusalem, the utterances of devils and the conscience of the sinner—all testify that "God is a righteous judge," and that, though long-suffering and plenteous in mercy, "He hath prepared His throne for judgment."

But we cannot afford to pass by any of the illustrations of such truths which God has given us in his Word, especially when underlined, as it were, for our consideration, by the commentary given us by the Holy Ghost in the New Testament; and we shall accordingly do well to ponder for a short time the very striking lessons which are brought before us in the conduct and fate of the inhabitants of Jericho.

We need not dwell long on the fact that they were *notorious sinners*, and that their disregard of

all restraint had lasted for centuries. Four hundred and thirty years before the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, God had declared His knowledge of the extreme sinfulness of the people of Caanan, when He promised Abraham that He would bring his seed into the land after four generations, for He said, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." The "doings of the land of Caanan" were such as called for judgment as loudly as the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their flagrant and outrageous sins were held up before the Israelites as crimes to be abhorred; and the most solemn warnings were given to them on the subject. "Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you. And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants" (Lev. xviii. 24, 25). They were deeply involved in the guilt of dealing with evil spirits, of which it was said, "For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee" (Deut. xviii. 12).

They were thus living without fear of God or man, wholly given up to "work all uncleanness with greediness," and the last verses of the 1st chapter of the epistle to the Romans no doubt accurately describe the "things worthy of death," in which these inhabitants of one of the fairest

spots of earth, "the glory of all lands," had pleasure.

And in this course they persisted for more than four hundred years, *in spite of the long-suffering of God*, who was "not willing that any should perish, but that all men should come to repentance." Year after year their fertile land, watered with the dew and rain of heaven, yielded its abundant harvests; their cornfields, and their oliveyards, were fruitful beyond imagination; their grapes of Eschol were such that two men could only carry one cluster; they "ate bread without scarceness;" out of their hills they dug brass, and their very stones were iron. It was "a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil-olive, and honey" (Deut. viii. 8); a land which Jehovah cared for, and on which His eyes rested always "from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deut. xi. 12).

Yet all these mercies, this gracious providence, this goodness of God, failed to lead them to repentance. "They glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." "He left Himself not without witness," in their midst, "in that He did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." But in vain. He spake unto them in their prosperity, but they said, "We will not hear" (Jer. xxii. 21). "Because

sentence against an evil work was not executed speedily, therefore the hearts" of these inhabitants of Jericho were "fully set in them to do evil" (Eccles. viii. 11). No nations on earth were more favoured, none appear to have abused the gifts and long-sufferings of God more persistently.

They had heard of His judgments; they had had amongst them His faithful servants. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had dwelt in their midst. The altar of the father of the faithful, the friend of God, had been erected in various spots of their country as he moved up and down in it, dwelling in tabernacles, and his pure worship of the only true God was not unknown to them. But the sins of the adjoining cities of the plain found ready imitators, and they eagerly ran after their abominations. In vain did the sudden and fearful overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah appeal to their consciences; though scarce a day's journey from their walls, their fate, "making them an ensample unto them that hereafter should live ungodly," deterred them not from following in their footsteps. The arm of a God of judgment was stretched out, but they would not see it; His voice spake loudly to them in the terrible storm of fire and brimstone which overwhelmed their neighbours, but they hearkened not.

Four hundred years and more rolled on; they were "filling up the measure of their iniquity." No other judgments fell on the land. All things

continued as they were; the bountiful hand of God, who "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth His rain on the just and on the unjust," supplying with unfailing regularity all their wants. Their "houses" were "safe from fear; the rod of God was not upon them." "He filled their houses with good things." But neither mercies nor judgments touched their seared consciences, and their sins, like their walls, reached "up to heaven."

At last a rumour reached them from the shores of a distant sea which roused alarm. Perhaps they had heard in days long gone by from the lips of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob that the land in which they dwelt was given by "Jehovah, the the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth," unto the descendants of the Hebrew strangers, and that at some future time they were to inherit it and expel them; but Abraham and Isaac had died; the famine had driven their descendants into Egypt, and though the funeral of Jacob at "the threshing floor of Atad, beyond Jordan," may have awakened a passing recollection of what they had heard, they only looked on it as "a grievous mourning to the *Egyptians;*" the lapse of four centuries gradually obliterated any tradition that might exist on the subject. It doubtless was occasionally whispered, as they passed the cave of Machpelah, that to him whose bones lay there belonged the fee simple of the land, and legends of his

mighty victory over the "king of nations" and his confederates still lingered amongst them. But as nothing more was heard of the Hebrews, save as some "merchantmen, Midianites," might mention that they had fallen into low estate in Egypt, and had become a down-trodden race of slaves, without power or spirit, all apprehension probably died away, and the "inward thought" of the dwellers in Jericho and the cities of the land was that they should "continue for ever." Their riches were great, their fortresses enormously strong; there were giants among them, and they could afford to treat with unconcern the fading tradition that told any other tale than that of increasing prosperity and power.

At length it was reported that the descendants of the man who but a few generations ago had dwelt in their land—rich in flocks and herds it is true—but having no inheritance there, "no, not so much as to set his foot on," abiding in his tent, and rearing his lonely altar to Jehovah wherever he rested, had multiplied exceedingly; that though they had left Canaan but seventy persons, they had become marvellously numerous, arousing by their numbers the fear of the rulers of Egypt; that persecution and the slaughter of their male children failed to check their rapid increase; that "the more the Egyptians afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." They heard that one night this persecuted people, deprived though they were of

means of resistance, unarmed and unorganised, had risen up as one man; that men, women, and children, with "not one feeble person among their tribes"—they had marched forth to regain their liberty; that the hand of the oppressor was powerless to stay them; that in that very night a terrible and unparalleled catastrophe fell upon the land of Egypt, for death had visited every house, from the palace of the king to the cottage of the peasant; that "there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead."

It was, moreover, specially reported how that when awaking from his terror and stupor the ruler of that land arose, and with all the flower and might of his army pursued the fugitives to bring them back to bondage, and when the waters of the Red Sea appeared to aid his purpose by barring the way of the Israelites, a strong east wind had "divided the sea, whose waves roared," that a path was made through the deep, "the waters being a wall unto Israel on their right hand and on their left;" that they passed over safely, and that their pursuers, hastening to overtake them, were overwhelmed by the sea "returning to its strength, and sank like lead in the mighty waters." In this last and marvellous event, the inhabitants of Canaan were compelled to recognise the hand of that God whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had worshipped. They saw the interference of Him who had made "the sea and all that therein is;" they acknowledged,

like the magicians of Egypt, that this was "the finger of God." They knew that at last, after centuries of delay, Jehovah was arising, that His enemies were being scattered, and that they that hated or opposed Him were compelled to flee before Him. One of themselves confessed the fact, when she said, "We have heard how Jehovah dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when ye came out of Egypt." And she added how the victories over the nations that dwelt on the other side of Jordan had brought dismay and terror into the hearts of the dwellers in Jericho, saying, "As soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Joshua ii. 11).

Nor was this all; they *saw His works.* A fresh marvel took place under their very walls, which exhausted any courage that might have remained in them, and should have brought them to repentance. They may have hoped that, as the torrent of the Jordan rolled impetuously between their city and the advancing hosts of Israel, they might be able to bar the progress of so great a multitude, which could only cross the fords at that time of the year with great difficulty. The two spies might be able to pass unobserved and unhindered, but surely they must have thought it impossible that so large a host could cross without occupying so

many days in the passage that their attempt might easily be frustrated by but a small number of the "mighty men of valour" that formed the garrison of Jericho. But what happened? What was the sight that met the gaze of any of the dwellers in that city who, impelled by curiosity, strolled to the banks of the river to look upon the Hebrew pilgrims encamped upon the other side, or who watched their movements from the battlements? They look, and behold a little band of men, not equipped for a battle, or even stripped to ford the river, but clad in flowing priestly robes, emerge from the camp of Israel, and bearing upon their shoulders a heavy object, covered with a cloth of blue, advance toward the torrent at the very spot where, swollen with the heavy rains of spring, it overflowed all its banks, and apparently defied all passage. They come to its very brink, and as "the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, the waters, which came down from above, stood, and rose up upon an heap; and those that came down failed, and were cut off." Jordan flees back, the waters recede before the advancing priests, and as they reach the centre of the river's bed, a broad path lies open from shore to shore! The mighty host of Israel follows by its tribes, and men, women, and children go "through the flood on foot," and pass "clean over Jordan." Then,—when every soul is safe in the land of Canaan, the priests come

up last of all, bearing the ark,—"then the waters of Jordan returned to their place, and overflowed all his banks, as they did before."

Oh, surely, as the dwellers in Canaan beheld that wondrous sight, they must have felt a solemn awe creeping over them! What mysterious power could this be that was thus subduing the elements? What secret but mighty influence was contained in that little object, covered with "cloth of blue," that those white-robed men bore upon their shoulders? Who was the God that was fighting for these descendants of Abraham? Could they hope to succeed behind their walls, when seas and rivers fled at the presence of the Hebrews' God, and when the giant cities of "Og, the king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites," fell before Him?

We know that thoughts of this kind passed through their minds. The power and judgments of God were being made manifest, and the sinners of Jericho trembled. They saw "the hand of the Lord, that it was mighty." "And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted; neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel" (Jos. v. 1). But did all this lead them to repentance? No! the tidings of His judgments, the sight

of His power, failed to touch the hearts that centuries of patient long-suffering and rich blessing had not availed to soften. They believed, but it was not the faith of repentance and submission; it was but the faith of devils, who "believe and tremble." As if aware that the day of grace was passed, and that there now remained nothing but a "fearful looking for of judgment," they only sought to prolong their resistance as much as possible, with the despairing feeling of those who in later days cried, "Art Thou come to torment us before the time?" They determined to hold out to the last, and to resist every effort on the part of Israel to effect an entrance into their city.

This is evident from their behaviour with regard to the two spies who had come to "view the land, even Jericho," and who went to Rahab's house and lodged there. The moment the king of Jericho heard of their presence he sought to slay them. He sent to arrest them, and when they could not be found, the messengers pursued after them in the direction they were supposed to have taken, even to the fords of Jordan. There was thus a determination to resist the very least attempt on the part of the servants of the true God to obtain a footing in the city; the presence of even two Israelites was sufficient to awaken the fears of the king, and to rouse the powers that ruled the place energetically to crush the smallest appearance of those who were on the side of the God of Abraham.

This probably took place but a few days before the passage of the Jordan, and the attitude of resistance became more resolute as the hour drew nigh for all resistance to be unavailing. Up to the time of the passage, it appears, from the entrance of the spies, that communication with the surrounding country was possible, but from that moment the strictest watch was kept. "Jericho was straitly shut up, none went out, and none came in." Thenceforward the opposition of the guilty city to the armies—to the power of the living God—became of the most intense character. The resolve was made, and the position taken up was unflinchingly maintained; they would fight to the last. They trusted in their strong walls and gates; there was their confidence placed, and in their own might, "their mighty men of valour." The defences their own hands had raised, the power of their own right arms, were the grounds of their reliance; in other words, they *trusted in their own works.*

And this was only natural. What, unless supernatural means were brought to bear upon them, could a host of pilgrims, numerous indeed, but encumbered with a vast proportion of women and children, and unprovided with any warlike appliances, at least with none fitted to attack such fortifications as those of Jericho, hope to accomplish? And if, as the recollection of the wonders of the Red Sea, or of the Jordan, or of the conquest

of Bashan and Gilead revived, the spirits of the garrison sank, a survey of their goodly bastions and lofty walls doubtless served, at least in some measure, to sustain their confidence. Such works as these, they would think, would surely stand them in some stead, and even if they failed to ensure ultimate victory, would, at any rate, enable them to make such a resistance as would obtain good terms whenever it became actually necessary to capitulate.

As the six days, during which the Israelites made their circuit of the city, passed away without any apparent result, it is probable that their confidence revived; the curious procession of the priests, a whole army marching and countermarching for six days, and leaving off only where it began, the blasts with the rams' horns, commanding no attack, and ending in nothing but empty sounds, if they at first awakened their apprehension, must at last have almost excited their ridicule; and they probably said, like Sanballat and Tobiah in a later day, "What do these feeble Jews?"

But their confidence was misplaced, and their contempt mistaken; their strongholds were about to crumble into dust, and that which was weak and foolish in their eyes was destined to overcome the mighty. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." No prolonged siege was to afford them either final victory or partial deliverance; "a

short work" was about to be made by the God of judgment. They had misused centuries of mercy and long-suffering, and had hardened their hearts as the tokens of judgment darkened the horizon; the day of grace was past and the day of judgment had set in; the word was to be fulfilled that "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall *suddenly* be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. xxix. 1).

They were *utterly destroyed.* "The dawning of the day," the seventh day, arrived. To their surprise, and perhaps to their further amusement, the city was compassed seven times; no further sign was given, when, all of a sudden, as at the close of the seventh circuit the monotonous blast of the trumpets pealed from the lips of the priests, a mighty, appalling, overwhelming shout burst from the hitherto silent thousands of Israel, the hoarse roar of nearly two million voices rent the air, and with a crash that shook the earth, "the wall of the city fell down flat;" their boasted bulwarks were levelled with the dust; "the people went up into the city, every man slaying before him, and they took the city!" "And they utterly destroyed all that were in the city, both men and women, young and old, with the edge of the sword." The despisers of mercy, the resisters of God, perished; the judgment which they feared came upon them; they fell by their own iniquity. Their works, their valour, were

powerless to withstand Jehovah when He arose to judgment.

And why did this awful fate, this utter destruction, overtake them? Was it because they were sinners? In one sense, yes; for "because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Yet since some of them, as guilty as the rest, were saved, it was not their sins alone that brought destruction upon them. Notwithstanding their sins, they might, like Rahab the harlot, their townswoman, have been saved, had they sought for mercy, and trusted in Him who was not "willing that any should perish." But they took no such course. Steeling their hearts against the warnings that alarmed them, stifling their convictions, trusting in their defences, the works of their own hands, they "*believed not*," and continuing among the unbelievers, the wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost, making them "an ensample to all who should hereafter live ungodly."

The picture is complete. Is it not a solemn one? The character, conduct, and fate of this ungodly and unbelieving people are a striking photograph, drawn by the very hand of God, and exhibiting, line for line, the features, life, and end of those who finally perish through unbelief.

Let me beseech you, reader, to ponder these things. You may be, indeed, one who, having trusted in Jesus, are already "delivered from the

wrath to come," for "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." There are, nevertheless, lessons you cannot afford to disregard; for though, through the mercy of God, the fate of "the unbelieving" can never be yours, you still live among them; you are left here to warn them of the end of the ungodly; and you are surrounded by a world that scoffs at the thought of coming judgment, and because it is delayed in mercy, cries, "Where is the God of judgment?" It is well for you to strengthen your faith in the solemn realities which God has revealed, by attentively considering the proofs which He has afforded in His Word.

And if, perchance, you who read these pages are still amongst the unsaved, if you are not yet among the Israel of God, trusting only to the blood of Christ, does it not much more concern you to mark well the characteristics of those who, in spite of mercies and judgments, finally perish with an everlasting destruction? Oh, surely it does; and I therefore pray you to bear with me a little longer, while I trace the leading features of those of whom God speaks in His Word as "the *lost*," that you may be led, before it be too late, to see the path on which you are treading, and ere the blast of the seventh trumpet peals in your ears, or the summons of the hand of death removes you from the world where mercy may still be found, may flee to Him who

came to seek and to save that which was lost, and who still says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

We may notice the following main characteristics of those that perish, from the history of the inhabitants of Jericho, which we have been considering:—

They that perish, perish because of their sins. It is quite true that unbelief is in one sense the cause of eternal ruin to them that are lost, since we read that "he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God;" and that "he that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Unbelief is their ruin, because it rejects the only way of salvation; it refuses Christ; it accepts not God's pardon in God's way—through a crucified Saviour. Unbelief is, indeed, the crowning, the damning sin, for it despises the Son of God, and just as a drowning man is lost, if he refuses to trust in the lifeboat, because of his want of faith, so a perishing sinner perishes if he rejects the Almighty hand held out to him, and the Almighty love that is ready to receive him. Trusting in Jesus, he would have been delivered from his sins; doubting Him, refusing Him, he continues in them; and thus his sins, which might have been forgiven him, remain upon him, and he perishes because of his sins.

Oh, remember this! No one will ever be able

to say that it was the fault of any one but himself that he is lost. "Thou hast destroyed *thyself*," is the charge of which one day he must acknowledge the truth. "Thou hast fallen by *thine* iniquity," is true of every sinner. He has committed "such things" as are "worthy of death," and sooner or later must confess to God that he receives the due reward of his deeds. The lips of many are now full of excuses, they lay the blame upon others, upon their circumstances, upon their nature (and thus on their Creator), but not upon themselves. But there must come a time, —and happy is it if it comes in the day of grace, in which confession ensures pardon,—when "every mouth will be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." No one who finally perishes will be able to say that it was anything but his own sins which brought him to destruction. As judgment came on the inhabitants of Jericho to the uttermost when they had filled up the measure of their iniquity; so is it because of sin, only because of sin, sin culminating in the persistent rejection of a divine Saviour, that "the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience."

But, further, *they that perish, perish in spite of the long-suffering of God.* As "the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah," as He gave the dwellers in Jericho more than four hundred years to repent and forsake their sins, so, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to

salvation," He bears with those who, nevertheless, "despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering" and "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness."

Men may say they have had no time, no opportunity; but it is a false excuse, and will one day be proved to be so. They have had plenty of time to "repent and turn to God," plenty of time to cry for mercy, plenty of time to believe in a Saviour, and to accept the gift of pardon through His name. Who is there that reads these pages, whose conscience does not tell him that ever since he can remember anything, he can remember from time to time that God's Holy Spirit pleaded and strove with him, that warnings and mercies were repeatedly sent to him, and that he had numberless opportunities of forsaking his sins and of coming to Christ. In childhood, in youth, in the prime of life, in declining years, the goodness and forbearance and long-suffering of God has been extended to him. "Daily loaded with benefits," kept alive "that he should not go down to the pit," delivered from accidents, restored from illness, surrounded with mercies, yet slighting, abusing, disregarding, it may be, all of them, he was the subject of the long-suffering of God.

Day after day has passed, each one comprising hours full of the goodness of God; years have rolled by, each one replete with blessing; time has been found for business, for home, for plea-

sure, for the world, for self—but none for God; yet God spared. He was "slow to anger;" He waited to be gracious; His long-suffering was salvation, but the unhappy sinner, blinded by his sins, knew not that "the goodness of God leadeth to repentance;" because judgment came not, he argued that it never would come, and thus the patience and long-suffering of God was wrested by him to his own destruction.

Oh, will not the recollection of years of grace be one of the bitterest ingredients in the cup that awakened memory will mingle in a world where hope never comes, and where the soul that perishes will be compelled to say, in words often read, but never believed to be applicable to itself, "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!" (Prov. v. 12, 13.)

Again, *they that perish, perish in spite of clear knowledge.* As the inhabitants of Jericho had heard again and again, as we have seen, of the power and judgment of God against sin, and had intensified His faithfulness and goodness towards them that trusted in Him, so they that are lost have had full knowledge, at least in their minds, of the character of God's dealings with those who serve Him, and with those who serve Him not. They have had Bibles (for I speak now of those who have lived in Christian lands), and they have

read them; they have heard of His judgments, and seen them; they have witnessed His mercies, and been the subject of them. God has spoken to them. Creation and revelation have testified to Him; they have beheld His goodness in the sunshine and the rain; they have felt His power in the thunder and the storm. Conscience has spoken within them, confirming the testimony of nature, and the truths of the Scriptures.

Like the ungodly and depraved world described in Romans i., they "knew God;" they could not help recognising Him, just as the men of Jericho knew that "Jehovah was God in heaven above and in the earth beneath." But they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and—because not received into the heart, but into the head,—that knowledge, though it occasionally made them tremble, and aroused solemn fears, profited them not; and therefore, knowing that there is a God, a Saviour, a heaven, a hell, a judgment to come, and a way of salvation, their knowledge is barren, like the devil's knowledge, and they perish in spite of it.

The knowledge they had was enough to have saved them. Rahab knew no more than her fellow-citizens, but she used that knowledge, while they abused it. Oh, will not the knowledge of God, which is now brought home to the mind and conscience of every one who lives under the sound of His word, shine with a terrible light, when it is looked back upon from a world of darkness; and

when it is seen that, rightly used, they who had it need not have perished?

But again, *they that perish, perish because they stifle convictions.* Again and again has the truth of God fallen upon their ear, aroused inquiry in the mind, and awakened the conscience. Solemn thoughts of eternity have forced themselves upon the soul; for a time they have turned from their old ways, have endeavoured to lead a new life, but as often they have turned back, and the warning voice of conscience which spoke loudly, echoing the truth, has been drowned by the "many kinds of voices in the world."

Sometimes a pointed message from the Lord has penetrated, like the spies into Jericho, into the very heart, and instantly the "strong man armed" that rules the sinner has used every means to deaden the impression. Business and pleasure, cares and joys, have all been brought into requisition to obliterate it, and the truth that had almost gained a foothold is, if not murdered, banished. If some soul-stirring thought has perchance lodged an hour or so within the walls, the night is not suffered to close without the effort, and, alas! too frequently, the successful effort, to get rid of it. A thousand means are ever ready at hand to dissipate the solemn thought, to silence conscience, to stifle conviction; and at last the final state supervenes, when the heart, like Jericho, is "straitly shut up," when none come in and none go out.

Oh, fearful condition! No messenger, no message from God permitted to enter; every means of access, every gate of the soul jealously, straitly guarded; prejudice, unbelief, love of the world, even religion, "falsely so-called," barring the approaches; the very subject shunned, the name of Jesus avoided, the approaches of the servants of God steadily guarded against. And none allowed to go out; every tendency to seek after God checked; any rising wish to pray subdued; any uneasiness of heart or conscience instantly quelled; no communication permitted; all under the power of darkness, the prelude of destruction. Such is the terrible condition of those who perish in spite of long-suffering—in spite of knowledge, in spite of convictions.

Lastly, *they that perish, perish because they trust in themselves.* The dwellers in Jericho placed their confidence in their high walls and their mighty men of valour; they trusted in themselves and in the works of their own hands. So do they who have heard of Christ, have stifled their convictions, and who finally perish in their sins. Every man that trusts not in Jesus puts his confidence in the flesh in one way or another. There may be numberless ways of doing this, but they all have the same result. It is in something connected with their own character, feelings, or doings that every soul relies that is ultimately lost.

I do not speak here so much of those who neither "profess nor call themselves Christians;" though

even with such their own character and conduct are frequently the ground of such hope as they may entertain of escape or deliverance in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment; but principally of those who, having a fear of coming destruction, but no submission to or trust in Him who delivers from the wrath to come, busy themselves in erecting such walls as will, they hope, shelter and save them in the end.

And they are often very earnest in the work. The "works of their hands" may present a fair and imposing appearance; as far as man's eye can see, their morality may be perfect, their conduct blameless, their behaviour irreproachable, their discharge of their relative duties in the world punctilious and just, and their attention to and performance of their religious duties regular and earnest. And these things are as "a high wall in their own conceit;" they have constructed with such labour and pains, at the expense, it may be, of a lifetime, such an edifice of character and conduct that hardly a suspicion enters into their mind that their very works, fair and trustworthy though they may appear, are the hindrance to their salvation. Their very religion shuts out Christ.

We cannot doubt, as before said, that if the men of Jericho had abandoned their defences, and, like Rahab, had cast themselves upon the mercy of Joshua, they would, like her, have been saved. But they preferred their own way of salvation, and

though it "seemed right" unto them, the "end thereof was the ways of death." The strength of their defences blinded and deluded them; they vainly thought up to the very last moment that they would be saved thereby. And so it is still: the abandonment of our own works, efforts, feelings, conduct, and character, as affording the slightest hope of salvation, and unconditional submission to the mercy of God in Christ, is the only way of salvation; and such as reject that way, and rely on other means, must perish. "There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

In these days, in so-called Christian lands, it is principally through reliance on good character and good works (though often, it may be, covered with the name of Christ)—in fact upon natural religion, miscalled Christianity—that men perish. "The best I can," is the principal ground of confidence of thousands, and although they profess not to trust in it, and end their prayers with the words "for Christ's sake," as if abandoning any plea connected with themselves, "the best I can," comes again and again to the front, and proves, after all, that what they are, or what they have done, affords them the most trustworthy hope of salvation. Should the suspicion cross their minds that their character and conduct is after all imperfect, they hope that the deficiency, great or small, will be made up—they hardly know how, but somehow or other—by Jesus

Christ. He must, they know, come in somewhere in their scheme of salvation, and they bring Him in at the end as a make-weight, but their trust is in themselves.

Such are they that perish, and they perish because of unbelief. *Christ* is not their alone salvation. They say practically to "the works of their hands, Ye are our gods." The apparent excellency of what they have done, and of what they are in the eyes of others, blinds and deludes them. Their very religion *shuts out* Christ; they perish because they trust in themselves, and put confidence into flesh.

Lastly, *they that perish, perish without remedy.* "They utterly destroyed all that was in the city." The temporal destruction which overwhelmed Jericho was entire and irremediable. Not less complete and irreversible is the "everlasting destruction" which will overwhelm those that "know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." There is no escape for those who neglect the great salvation which a gracious God has provided for all who will accept it. Sin persisted in, long-suffering abused, judgments slighted, convictions quenched, must end in "destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power."

That judgment may be long delayed, but it is not the less sure. "Sentence against an evil work" may not be "executed speedily," but it is no less certain. In their scoffing denial of the

lessons of past history, and their disbelief in the solemn predictions of events yet to come, men, "walking after their own lusts," may say, "Where is the God of judgment?" "Where is the promise of His coming?" and because "He is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," they may argue that punishment will never overtake the ungodly. But God's threatenings and warnings of the destruction of the impenitent are as true as His promises of mercy to them that repent. "THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL COME;" the "last trump" shall sound; "The hour is coming when all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation"—

"There shall come a night
Of such wild affright,
As none beside shall know;
When the heavens shall shake,
And the wide earth quake,
In its last and deepest woe.

"What horrors shall roll
O'er the godless soul,
Waked from its death-like sleep;
Of all hope bereft,
And to judgment left,
For ever to wail and weep.

"The terrors of God,
As an iron rod,
Shall bruise that cursed seed;

Who His truth have spurned,
And never have learned
The love of the cross to read.

"The children of day
Are summoned away,
Left—are the children of night;
Sealed is their doom,
For there's no more room;
Filled are the mansions of light.

"What an awful cry
Will rend the sky,
'Open to us, O Lord!'
Oh, ye sinners, yet
Ere the door be shut,
Let that cry in faith be heard."

How fearfully solemn must have been that supreme moment when, as the self-confident sinners of Jericho watched the host of Israel marching round their vaunted walls, they heard, and heard for the last time, the blast of the trumpets they had despised. The seventh blast pealed forth; the mighty roar, the shout of the many thousands of Israel shook the air; the walls came crashing to the earth, and the ungodly learned that the "wrath of God" was come. Oh, the dismay, the terror, the self-accusations, the remorse that must then have filled every breast! Repentance was too late. They perished.

The trumpet of God's gracious gospel is sounding now, summoning hearts to surrender; each repeated invitation, each moment of long-suffering, brings

the end nearer. There will be a "last trump." There will be a "shout." Not the trump of earthly trumpeters, not the shout of earthly millions. "The LORD HIMSELF shall descend from heaven with a *shout*, with the voice of the archangel, and with *the trump of God.*" Oh, what a sound! Oh, what a trumpet blast! If once, as "the voice of the trumpet sounded long and waxed louder and louder," "all the people trembled;" if once His voice shook the earth "at the giving of the law;" what unspeakably awful sounds will fill the universe when that moment comes of which "He hath promised, saying, Yet once more, I shake not the earth only, but also heaven."

"And the *seventh angel sounded;* and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. xi. 15).

Reader, what will that moment be to you! Shall you, as one washed in the blood of the Lamb, be able to join in the glorious anthem of praise which will then burst forth from the redeemed, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned" (Rev. xi. 17). Or, shall you be amongst those who vainly cry to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the

Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. vi. 16, 17.)

Oh, wait not for that hour to seek salvation! Then it will be too late; your little day of grace may end soon; already the summons may be on the point of issuing forth which shall call you hence. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah lv. 6).

"In this little while,
Though never so vile,
Christ Jesus can make you whole.

"And then in that night
Of such wild affright,
As none beside shall know,
Ye shall calmly rest
On *His* tender breast,
Far off from the world's last woe."

VII.

SAVED BY FAITH.

"*And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive.*"
—JOSHUA vi. 25.
"*By faith the harlot Rahab perished not.*"
—HEB. xi. 31.

THE history of Jericho, while it affords, as we have seen, some of the most instructive lessons of the guidance and encouragement of those who, as soldiers of Christ, are engaged in seeking to "subdue kingdoms" and to win victories for God, exhibits at the same time a most solemn and awful warning to those who, despising the "goodness of God which leadeth to repentance," "treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds."

But it contains more than this. Beyond its lessons for the servants and its warnings for the enemies of God, it includes an example of the salvation of sinners "by faith," which has been specially noted in the New Testament for consideration, and which is indeed a most conspicuous illustration of the grace of God. "Rahab the harlot" is one

of those who, like "the woman that was a sinner" in later days, like Zaccheus the publican, Saul the Pharisee, the thief on the cross, and the jailer at Philippi, obtained mercy that they might be "patterns to them which should hereafter believe on Jesus Christ to life everlasting."

The subject has been dwelt upon indeed so often, that there can hardly be a child who is not familiar with its outward form, or its inward teaching, and I cannot therefore expect, nor indeed do I wish, to bring forward anything new connected with it. It is the old, old story of a sinner saved by grace through faith; but as long as there are souls unsaved, and the day of grace lasts, that story, in all the various ways in which our Bible tells it, can never be heard too often; and though the object of the present volume is rather to afford help and encouragement to the servants of God than to set forth the gospel to others, I am glad that it should close with one of those lovely unfoldings of the way of salvation, in which the Old Testament abounds, and which God has so often used to lead souls to Himself.

Our last study was the fearfully solemn picture of the judgment of God falling after years of patient forbearance on those who persisted in sin and unbelief,—the certain doom of those "who knew not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." He who "putteth away all the wicked of the earth like dross" will at last

arise in judgment. "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xiii. 41, 42). "The wicked shall perish at the presence of God." Of this terrible fate of the ungodly we have the foreshadowing in the destruction of the unbelieving inhabitants of Jericho.

But amongst those inhabitants one family "perished not." While that judgment was impending, and even when the seventh and last trump pealed through the air, and the mighty walls of the city were laid even with the dust, there was one household without fear. The crashing walls, the shout of Israel, the hosts of armed men rushing up into the defenceless city, brought no terror to one family. The "household of faith" could quietly await that solemn moment, and could recognise, amid the armies of the living God who were charged with the terrible work of destruction all around, the servants to whom the duty was entrusted of conveying them far from the scene of carnage and woe into the very camp of Israel, there to dwell in peace.

And what was the secret of their preservation? A little scarlet line or cord, outside their house, hanging from one of their windows down the wall of the city, a thing unseen by the inhabitants, and if seen, doubtless thought nothing of, was their salvation. It was the token between Rahab and

the leader of the armies of Israel that insured perfect safety to her and all her family. While Jericho's king, and his mighty men of valour, trusted to their walls, apparently so strong and able to save them, a poor and despised harlot placed all her confidence in an object, which to man's eye and judgment could avail absolutely nothing—"a vain thing for safety." But they perished, and she and all her kindred "perished not with them that believed not."

What a beautiful picture of the "household of faith," of those who having "the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom," seek and find the way of salvation, and who, putting their trust in the precious blood of Christ, so vividly foreshadowed by that scarlet line, and in the word of Him that cannot lie, have "boldness in the day of judgment," and await that solemn day with the confidence of those who know that "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Let us then dwell a little on some of the most important truths presented to us in this incident of Old Testament history, "written for our learning;" and may each reader gain help and encouragement therefrom to trust with simplicity and confidence in Him who has given a true token of salvation to all who flee from the wrath to come to Him as the "hope set before" them.

Rahab was a sinner. There is no doubt about this. Her life was an immoral one. The licen-

tiousness of the inhabitants of Canaan characterised her. Old and New Testament speak of her as "the harlot Rahab." She was no better than she should be. She was no better than others. She was worse than some. As regards her character and conduct she stood on a level with, if not below, her neighbours. She was "a woman that was a sinner." She belonged to a class that the world generally disdains, sometimes pities, but always looks upon as several shades worse than other people. Yet she was saved while others perished.

Why is her "unfortunate," her sinful calling so conspicuously dwelt upon by the Holy Spirit of God? Would it not have been as well to have omitted all mention of her special sin? Would it not have answered the purpose to have cited her as a dweller in Jericho, and therefore, doubtless, much on a par with other sinners in that city, but to have left unnoticed the flagrant immorality of her life. No, it would not. He who came "to seek and to save that which was lost," would show that the objects of His mission and work were sinners, "dead in trespasses and sins," without a vestige of goodness in them, without the shadow of a claim to mercy, without any redeeming feature or quality in them; and, therefore, He has taken here, as well as elsewhere, for types of His great salvation, those of whom none could say that it was anything in *them* that was a predisposing cause why they should be saved. He has given us the story of a lost woman

saved by grace through faith, that all ground of hope in any human righteousness might be cut away; that all might see that as there is but one way of salvation, one Saviour, all who are saved must be saved on the same terms as those on which Rahab the harlot was saved; and that those who are conscious that they have no righteousness of their own, that their character and their conduct, seen by the eye of God, is only *bad*, might be encouraged to trust in Him who "justifieth the *ungodly*," who "came into the world to save *sinners*."

Yes, much as the natural pride and self-righteousness of the human heart may rebel against it, all who will be saved must come on the same ground.

With their finger on their lips, like the leper of old, they must cry, "Unclean, unclean;" like Daniel, Peter, Isaiah, and Job, they must confess, "My comeliness is turned into *corruption*," "I am a *sinful* man," "I am a man of *unclean* lips," "I *abhor* myself," "Our righteousnesses is as *filthy* rags." They must come to the cross, the place of death—come to an end of themselves—and then, and then only, can they meet with salvation.

Salvation is only for *lost* sinners. Nicodemus must give up his long life of religious duties; they cannot enable him to "see," much less to "enter into the kingdom of God." Saul of Tarsus must count his blameless adherence to the law as absolute "loss," he must be brought to the very dust. Job, the perfect man and upright, must acknowledge that

all his boasted perfections are but uncleannesses in the sight of an infinitely holy God. Every particle of fancied merit, whether of thought, word, or deed, must be laid aside, and then Christ can be received as a perfect Saviour, a complete righteousness.

This is God's way of salvation. "This man receiveth *sinners*." And He receiveth none else. Not sinners who hope to balance at least some of their sins with some of their good deeds; not sinners who are doing "the best they can;" not sinners who, while they confess themselves such with their lips, yet in their hearts persuade themselves that after all they are not so bad as others; not such does Jesus Christ receive. For such do not receive Him as a *Saviour*. They cannot truly say—

> "Nothing in my hand I bring,
> Simply to Thy cross I cling."

Their hands are full of their own works; their eyes rest upon, and their hearts are occupied with, what they are doing in the way of righteousness, or what they are feeling towards God. They cannot receive Christ, and He will not receive them, for they are trampling on His blood. They are "going about to establish their own righteousness," and not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God.

But blessed be His name, He does save *lost* sinners. "The God of all grace" receives and welcomes *bad* people. He "justifieth the *ungodly*." And it

is only lost, bad, ungodly people whom He does save. Badness is the only qualification for salvation that a sinner *must* possess. No other possession can render him a fit subject for the saving mercy of God. He need not have one particle of goodness, for it is only persons that have not one atom of natural or acquired goodness whom God saves through Jesus Christ. "Christ died for the ungodly;" "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." This is the only plea connected with myself that can entitle me to salvation—that I am a *sinner;* for "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Sinfulness, sinfulness alone, renders me a proper subject for salvation. Of this glorious truth, "Rahab the harlot" is an example.

Rahab gave herself up for lost. "I know that the Lord hath given you the land," said she; and, as she probably knew the reason, she must have been quite sure that her character and conduct were not such as could entitle her to hope to be spared. If there were any in Jericho who were "not so bad as others," she knew that she was not one of them. She was a bad woman, and she gave herself up for lost, and threw herself on the mercy of the instruments of God's wrath, and not in vain: what she sought she found. Just as she was, she appealed for salvation, and she was not disappointed. While others were "doing the best they could" to ward off the coming judgment, she acknowledged her inability to meet it, and trust-

ing in the appointed means of salvation, was immediately and completely saved.

And this is still the only way. To acknowledge our utter ruin, to confess the entire failure of our character and conduct to meet the claims of God's righteous law, and to cast ourselves in helplessness, just as we are, upon the tender mercy of God in Christ, is the only way of salvation. But blessed be God, it is a sure way of salvation, and of an immediate and complete salvation; for as Rahab was immediately and completely saved the moment she took and trusted in the appointed token—though some time elapsed before the judgment was poured out and she was taken out of the scene of destruction—so the sinner who receives and trusts in Jesus, the appointed Saviour, is instantly and everlastingly saved, though he may be left for a while in the world which is ripening for judgment.

Is not this truth that the acknowledgment of guilt and ruin, the taking the place of condemnation, is the indispensable, but at the same time the sure way to be immediately saved, taught us again and again in the Scriptures of truth?

What does David say? "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; *and Thou forgavest* the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. xxxii. 5).

What does Isaiah teach us? No sooner does the cry escape from him, as he stands in the all-discovering light of the "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Woe is me! for I am undone;

because I am a man of unclean lips," than, swift as lightning, the flying seraphim lays a live coal from the altar upon his lips, and the gracious words are spoken, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and *thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged*" (Is. vi. 5, 6, 7).

What does the publican's prayer tell us? Conscious of nothing but that he is a sinful man, so conscious of it that he dares not lift up his eyes unto heaven, he cries, "God be merciful to me *the* sinner," * as if there were no other sinners in the world but himself. And the Lord's word concerning him is, "I tell you, this man went down to his house *justified*" (Luke xviii. 13, 14).

What does the lovely picture of the returning prodigal tell, but that even before the words of confession leave his lips, as he stands there, his look and attitude revealing his consciousness of guilt, the father's arms are round his neck, and the father's kisses are covering his cheek, and telling, far more sweetly and graciously than words can tell, of pardon, acceptance, and restoration? (Luke xv.).

What do we learn from the high priest standing before the Lord, the filthy garments with which he is clothed betraying his hopelessly sinful condition, and his lips, closed for very shame, unable to frame a single excuse? He has nothing to say; he is "without one plea." And then, as

* See the Greek.

he stands there, convicted and self-condemned, the gracious words of a pardoning God fall upon his ear, "I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zech. iii.).

What do all these say? They do but repeat the blessed truth that Rahab brings before us, that—

> "We cannot expect to be *perfectly saved*
> Till we find ourselves *utterly lost*;"

and further, that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Yes, it is only when we take the place of helpless, hopeless sinners, that there is room for the grace of God to lay hold of us. It is only the lost, the guilty, and the self-condemned that need, that seek, and that find a Saviour.

But such do find Him, or rather, He finds them; for "He came to seek and to save that which was lost," and He "goeth after that which was lost, until He find it." Rahab gave herself for lost, and she was saved.

She heard about and believed in God. So did her fellow-townsmen, but in quite a different way. They had heard, as we have seen, of Jehovah and His power, and they trembled as they heard. Their spirits sank at the tidings of approaching judgment. But there they stopped. Their faith was the faith of "devils," who "believe and tremble."

They quenched their convictions; they barred their gates; they trusted in their walls; they resisted God and perished.

Rahab took a different course. She had no greater opportunities than others. She heard exactly the same report that they heard; there was no difference in the character of the tidings that reached her ears. She trembled as they did; but when a way of salvation was set before her, she did what they did not—*she took it.* She had nothing to trust in. "Her house was upon the town-wall, and she dwelt upon the wall;" but she had no confidence in it, and she sought and grasped the means of deliverance by throwing herself upon the mercy of the leader of the armies of the Lord. While they to the last hoped to ward off judgment, she yielded at once. While others only heard and trembled, she said, "*I know* that Jehovah hath given you the land."

She did not stifle her convictions, and when two men came from Joshua, forerunners of the advancing host, to "view the land, even Jericho," to view it as those surveying a property which was already theirs, and as it were to claim possession, she received them. They "lodged" in her house. The men of Jericho sought to bring them out and slay them, but she hid them. In the conduct of the citizens we have seen the way in which the men of the world treat every claim that God makes upon them, every message that

He sends to their hearts; they get rid of them. In the conduct of Rahab we see the treatment which a sinner who really believes in an approaching judgment gives to the claim of God, or to any message which may in His providence happen to reach him. Such an one, conscious of guilt, and of deserving the wrath to come, admits the claim, welcomes the message, and hides it in the heart.

This may, indeed, take place unknown to others; the reception of God's Word may be studiously concealed from the world. Rahab had a double motive, perhaps, in denying that the men were in her house; she may have denied it first to save *their* lives, and secondly to save *her own*. The desire to preserve them from ill-treatment, and the fear that she might be involved in their fate, probably alike influenced her, and prompted her to the deception of which she was guilty.* And so it often is when the truth of God first finds an entrance into a sinner's heart. No sooner is it admitted than the strong man armed seeks to

* Rahab's lie has been a difficulty to some, for they have been unable to understand how the conduct of one who told a deliberate untruth can be held up for commendation in the Scriptures. But it should be noticed that, whilst her faith is mentioned as an example for us, and her reception and concealment of the spies is cited as an illustration of works accompanying true faith, her lie is never commended. It should be further remembered that her act of deception was the act of a heathen, knowing as yet nothing of the way of holiness, though she was taking the first step in the way of peace. As has been well said, "When she got into the camp of Israel, she was doubtless taught to speak the truth."

eradicate it, and the soul that is beginning to believe in God is tempted to conceal the fact, and even to deny that any *abiding* impression has been made, partly from the fear of the consequences that might ensue to itself, partly from an anxious desire to shield the newly-received truths from the rough treatment of the unbelieving world.

But whether this be always so or not, the truth admitted abides, and instantly "brings forth fruit after its kind." Rahab began to acknowledge her hopeless condition, and to seek a way of salvation. Once the truth of God's claims is allowed entrance, that truth begins to work; it cannot be inoperative. It is "the Word of God which effectually worketh in (them) that believe." *All* the fruits may not be brought forth at once, but some must ensue; for "the Word of God is quick and powerful," and the seed, though it be to man's eye "the smallest of all seeds," must germinate and grow.

The faith in God, if it can be so called, that does not lead its possessor to seek salvation must be a dead faith. It is one thing to repeat a creed with the lips, and quite another to believe with the heart. Numbers give a weekly or even daily assent with their lips to all the articles of an "apostles' creed," yet never believe with an apostle's faith. They profess that they "look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come," but they look with closed eyes. "The resurrection of the dead" is the very last

thing they would like to meet their gaze, and the life of this present world quite shuts out "the life of the world to come." They have never taken one *real* step to escape impending judgment; they have never *really* sought salvation, or they would have found it. They may "profess and call themselves Christians," but they have never yet been "led into the way of truth;" for they have never cared with one moment's *real* desire to ask for it. I say *real* desire, for the vague *hope* to be saved and *wish* to go to heaven which numbers say they entertain, but which never leads them to turn their back on sin and the world, or their face to heaven, is no more real than Judas' professed love to Christ. When a sinner *really* wants to be saved, he asks for the way, and he takes it and comes to Christ. The jailer at Philippi really wanted salvation, and he got it and rejoiced. "He that seeketh findeth." Real faith in God leads men to seek salvation.

Rahab was not content with deep convictions. Her feelings and impressions were not salvation; deep as they were, they could not save.

Many trust to their feelings. They have been deeply moved under some startling sermon; an appeal to their consciences has made a vivid impression; or on the other hand, some soothing and comforting sensations have been experienced, or some novel desires after better and more lasting joys than the world can give have stirred their

hearts. But there they stop; to these they recur; on these they build their hopes. Oh, shifting sand! The keenest feelings of sorrow, the loudest alarms of conscience, the most heavenly sensations of peace and joy, the most earnest longings after the things of God, form no foundation for a "sure and steadfast hope!" All these are as fleeting as the dew, as changeable as the wind, as untrustworthy as water; for they are all connected with self, and can afford no possible ground on which to build for eternity. "He that trusts in his own heart (or in anything that comes out of his own heart) is a fool."

But it may be said, Are not these convictions, these desires, these joys, these feelings, the work of God's Spirit in the heart? Is no reliance to be placed on them? No, none whatever; granted that they are the work of the Holy Ghost, that work *in* us is not the substitute for Christ's work *for* us. The latter, not the former, is the object of faith. We are not told to trust in the Holy Ghost, but to trust in Christ. What He has done for us, not what the Blessed Spirit has graciously wrought in us, is the ground of faith. The highest and the deepest spiritual experience afford no resting place. Christ alone is the "tried stone, the sure foundation;" only "he that believeth on Him shall never be confounded." "I turn from all past experience to a present offered Christ," said a dying clergyman, who had served

his Master long and faithfully, to those who would have comforted him in his last hours by recalling the spiritual joys of former days. Christ, not feelings or convictions, is the only certain ground. Rahab was not satisfied till she had got salvation. Reader, be not content; nay, you cannot be content till you have got Christ, for He is "the salvation of God."

Rahab must have the fullest certainty. She could not rest until she had the certainty of salvation. "Swear unto me by the Lord," she said. She must have nothing short of absolute assurance; her safety must depend on and be connected with the name of Jehovah. Nothing less than this would do for her. A truly awakened conscience can never be satisfied without complete certainty. Many may argue that certainty is unattainable; as many more may urge that to assert the possession of it is presumptuous. Such souls have never trembled under the fear of the "wrath to come;" or if their consciences have been momentarily pricked, they have been soothed again by the hope that through the mercy of God all will be right in the end. They have never known the horror of uncertainty; buoyed up by their own righteousness, using the name of Christ as an opiate, yielding willing credence to the lie of the tempter, "Ye shall not surely die," the thought that they may, after all, perish at last, has never been allowed to dwell within their minds, even if

sometimes the suspicion may have crossed the threshold. Therefore, they are at ease. Instead of the absolute certainty of God's Word, they have satisfied themselves with the absolute *un*certainty of their own thoughts and feelings; and lest they should be shaken out of this delusive comfort, indignantly deny that anything surer is attainable, and denounce as blasphemous those who assert that they "*know* that (they) have eternal life."

We may, indeed, say that the man who is content without full assurance of salvation, has never fathomed the depth of his own utter ruin, or weighed God's anger against sin. The soul that is conscious of its guilt, and of its entire helplessness, must not only seek salvation, but cannot rest until it knows that it is saved. Like Rahab, it must have "a true token," it must have the security of the name of the unchangeable Jehovah that it shall never perish.

This Rahab obtained. The true token was given her in the scarlet line; the assurance of safety was given to her by the spies when they pledged their word, in the name of the Lord, that she should be saved alive. True servants of Joshua and of the Lord, they declared the certainty of salvation to her who believed, and who, because she believed, took the way of salvation they pointed out, and placed all her dependence on it.

There was a twofold token—that is, there was a sign between Rahab and the armies of Israel; the

scarlet line, which was the token to them of the house which was to be spared from destruction, and there was the token between the armies and Rahab, the oath in the name of the Lord that her salvation was sure. Her salvation depended on the scarlet line; her assurance was the oath of the spies. Thus, with that scarlet line hanging down the wall from the window of her house, and with the solemn promise that she should not perish in the destruction that was impending, she had perfect security, and she knew that she had it. Let us notice both these points, for they are all important.

The scarlet line was appointed as the distinguishing mark. Rahab did not choose or design it herself. It was given her for a token. So is the precious blood of Christ given to sinners, as that which in the eye of God is to distinguish them from a perishing world. It is the ground of their salvation. There are other marks, it is true. There is the inward mark in the heart, the seal of the Spirit of God, whereby they are further recognised by Him who trieth the hearts, and "knoweth them that are His." And there are the outward marks, the works of faith, and fruits of righteousness, which are discernible by the eye of man. But neither the seal of God's Spirit in the heart, although it is a mark which is invariably impressed on them that trust in the blood of Christ, nor the fruits of holiness in the life, are the ground of salvation. They are the "things that accompany salva-

tion," not the cause of it. The only thing that stood between Rahab and death was the scarlet line. The only thing that stood between Israel in Egypt and the death of the first-born, was the blood of the lamb. The only thing that stands between a sinner and the wrath of God, is the blood of Christ. A crucified Jesus is the only Saviour. The blood of the lamb in Egypt, the scarlet line at Jericho, were the appointed means of salvation from destruction then. The "precious blood of Christ" is the divinely appointed means of salvation now.

And as God Himself has decreed and appointed that means, so no other will be of any avail. Had Rahab, after hearing the word of the spies, thought that another colour than scarlet would be more likely to attract attention, and hung out a blue or yellow or white cord, or had she either beautified it with silver braid, or substituted a golden cord, such might have looked brighter, but it would not have been recognised. The armies of Israel were told to spare only the house whence the scarlet line was displayed.

It might seem an insignificant thing to which to trust the life of a whole family. Compared with the broad and lofty walls, and the swords and shields in which the mighty men of valour around Rahab trusted, it was, indeed, in the eyes of men a mere nothing; and probably any of her neighbours who knew that she, her father, mother, and brethren, were placing their whole reliance for

safety—should the worst come to the worst, and the Israelites really take the city—on a little scarlet cord, counted her a fool for her pains. But it was the appointed token, and the only way of salvation.

It was a "true token" between her and the army of Joshua; but only between them. No other eye could see it. It was invisible to the men of Jericho; it was outside their walls; and they must indeed have wondered as they noticed the quiet fearlessness of approaching destruction which doubtless characterised Rahab and her kindred, and perceived nothing which could protect them any more than others.

And so it is still. The precious blood of Christ Jesus Himself, the true token given by God to sinners, whilst everything to them that believe in Him, is nothing to the men of this world. There is "no beauty in Him that they should desire Him." His name indeed is mentioned; but His saving power is not discerned; "He is despised and rejected of men." He standeth among them, but they know Him not. And therefore unbelieving men count the calm assurance of salvation of those who are trusting entirely to the Lord Jesus Christ as conceit, presumption, and folly. They cannot understand such a feeling as "boldness in the day of judgment." And why? Because they are trusting to their own defences, and they cannot help the terrible misgiving that that whereon they rely may fail them at the last; and they cannot

understand that the soul that is leaning wholly on the work of another—confiding entirely in the blood of Christ—His death for them—must have a sure ground of hope for the very reason that their foundation is not the shifting sand of their own character, works, or feelings, but the immovable, immutable Jehovah Himself, the tried stone, "the Rock of Ages."

Yes; the foundation of the believer's hope is a secret between God and his own soul—common indeed to all believers, but unknown and imperceptible to the eye of sense. The world may despise and trample on the precious blood of Christ; but the soul that, conscious of its just exposure to wrath, trusts in that blood for shelter, sees and values nothing in the world beside Jesus crucified. There may have been in the houses of Jericho that day many a scarlet line lying unthought of, unused, unvalued, while to that one believing household it was the secret but the true token of a sure salvation.

It was the true token; but Rahab's safety depended not on *her seeing* it, but on her trusting in it. In fact she could not see it; it was outside, not inside her house. She had to hang it out and depend upon it, not look at it. It was the sight of it by others, not by Rahab, that ensured her salvation. Precisely as in the night of destruction in Egypt God said not to Israel, "When *you* see the blood," but "When *I* see the blood, I will

pass over you." It was by faith, not by sight, that they were saved. It was by trusting in, not looking at, the scarlet line that Rahab was saved. It is by *trusting* in Jesus, not by the perception of the senses, that the sinner is saved.

Israel could not see the blood of atonement sprinkled on the mercy-seat; they had to trust in it. God saw it, that was enough—

> "God looks upon the sprinkled blood,
> It is our only plea."

Thus we are shut up to faith. The scarlet line is outside. Jesus stands between us and judgment. We trust Him, with or without feelings (they make us neither more nor less secure) and we are saved.

Rahab knew she was saved. The scarlet line was the token between her and Israel; the oath was the token and assurance to her. Without this, as we have seen, she could not rest satisfied. And she got what she wanted—her desire was met. A full assurance of perfect safety was given to her, and the name of the great Jehovah was solemnly impressed upon the covenant between her and the spies. She could, therefore, be sure that her deliverance was secured. Though there were several links in the chain, Rahab the harlot yet stood in a relation to the God of heaven that ensured all she needed. Her safety was made to depend upon the very name, *i.e.*, upon the person and character of the God that cannot lie. Thus she knew that she

was saved. If these links held, if the chain remained unbroken, she was delivered.

How did she know she was saved? By the promise that was given her, she received the "witness of men." She believed what they said; and if their word could be depended upon, she knew that she was saved. It all rested upon that, and upon that alone. Her own character and conduct afforded no hope, and her own feelings could be no proof to her that salvation was hers. The promise in the name of the Lord was her only, but, at the same time, her complete security.

And do not they who trust in Jesus know that they are saved? Have they not the security of Jehovah's name? Has He not sworn by Himself that they shall never perish? Has He not given them a promise and an oath that "by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, they might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them"? He cannot deny Himself. "The witness of God is greater than the witness of men." The salvation of every soul that trusts in Jesus is bound up with the very name and character of the eternal God.

It is this that is the ground of assurance. As Rahab said to the messengers, "According to your words, so be it," and was satisfied with the solemn pledges they had given her, so the soul of the believer rests, or ought to rest, with unwavering

confidence in the promise of the unchangeable God. He has declared in the most solemn and emphatic manner possible that, "whosoever trusteth in Jesus shall never perish," that "he hath everlasting life," "is passed from death unto life," and "shall never come into condemnation." As a man's character depends on his truthfulness, so we may reverently say, the character of God is connected with His word; and He cannot let that soul perish which, relying on His promise, has fled to Christ for safety, without breaking that word, on which all things depend for continuance.

The reply which an aged child of God gave to one, who, with less understanding of the everlasting covenant, asked her how it would be, if, after all, her soul was lost, was therefore a good one, "God would have the greatest loss," she replied. "How so?" was the somewhat perplexed reply. "Nanny might lose her soul, but God would lose His character, and the whole universe would rush into confusion," was her answer, and a good one too. She saw that all things depended on His faithfulness, and that if His word which was pledged to her could be broken, there was no security for any created thing. Yes, old Newton's words which have encouraged many a soul are true—

"Rejoice, believer, in the Lord,
Who makes *your* cause *His own;*
The hope that rests *upon* His word
Can ne'er be overthrown.

"Though many foes beset your road,
And feeble is your arm;
'Your life is hid with Christ in God,'
Beyond the reach of harm."

The links in the chain cannot break. In Rahab's case they certainly might; for the spies might have deceived her, or have afterwards forgotten their promise, or Joshua might have refused to endorse the pledge they had given. There the links were human, "of the earth, earthy," and they might break. But not so with the greater salvation, of which Rahab's deliverance is but an illustration. In the chain which unites the believing soul to God there is but one link, not an earthly, but an heavenly one, the man Christ Jesus, He who with one hand touches the throne of glory, and with the other holds in a grasp that neither earth nor hell can unlock,—the grasp of an everlasting love, and an almighty power,—the helpless one that trusts in Him.

Here, then, is encouragement for every awakened soul, for every guilty sinner, who—conscious of sin and the judgment it deserves—seeks as Rahab sought, a way of salvation. "Salvation" is "prepared before the face of all people;" it is provided for sinners; guilt does not exclude, for it is for those who are so guilty that they are *lost.* It is none but the *lost* who can be *saved.* Therefore all are welcome, and without any preparation but a bad character, may put their trust, for time and

for eternity in Him who said without any reservation whatever, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." Rahab was saved *by faith*, and you can be saved in no other way. She trusted in the means of salvation pointed out, and in the words of those who declared it, and she was saved. Doubtless her faith was accompanied by conduct corresponding to it, and her belief was proved by her works—and at this point we will look in a succeeding chapter—but her *conduct* was no more conducive to her salvation than her *character*, her works stood her in no more stead than her words. God tells us emphatically, "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not." "Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou* shalt be saved."

Let us notice lastly for the present that she took the prescribed means of salvation *at once*. "She sent them away, and they departed, and she bound the scarlet line in the window." She lost no time about it; she felt there was none to lose; she knew nothing about the seven days that were to be occupied by the besieging army in marching round the walls; for all she knew judgment might fall immediately on Jericho; therefore, without a moment's delay, she sheltered herself under the only thing that was given her for a way of escape and as a token of salvation. Thus she evidenced the reality of her faith, that it was no momentary alarm, no superficial impression which was dissipated when the messengers departed. She could

not bear to wait for safety till the last solemn moment came, and till the crash of falling walls and the cries of perishing multitudes told that the wrath of God was come. That, she must have felt, would be but a bad time to search for a scarlet cord, and to bind it in the window, when the eyes were dimmed with terror, and the hands palsied with fear. Perhaps then no such cord might be found, perhaps then there might be no time or strength to fasten it where it could be seen. Therefore, without delay, as one who gave herself up for lost, and who really trusted in the appointed way of salvation, she bound the token in the window.

Was she not wise? Would it not have been the height of folly to have acted otherwise? Can you imagine her doing differently, and putting off even for an hour the only step necessary to ensure perfect safety? No, you cannot. Oh, reader, when you thus judge, are you condemning yourself? Are you delaying to secure salvation? Are you postponing to some future but indefinite moment the settlement of the important question of your safety in the day of judgment? It is not then that deliverance can be found. It may be found and ascertained for certain now, "for NOW is the accepted time, NOW is the day of salvation." Rahab was saved before that solemn hour came, for though her salvation was manifested to others then, it

was assured to her the moment she put her trust in the scarlet line.

When will you have a "more convenient season?" Are you sure that you will be given a long season of preparation, a clear warning beforehand of the time when you will be called hence. And do you think that, putting other considerations aside, an hour when perhaps your body is racked with pain, and your mind, if conscious, enfeebled with illness, can be the best in which to settle a more important matter than any other which has ever engaged your attention.

Are you sure that if young now you will ever be old,—that if busy now you will ever have a time of leisure,—that if in circumstances you consider unfavourable now, you will ever be in such as you will deem favourable,—that you will retain your faculties to the last,—that you will not die suddenly, —that the day of the Lord may not come before you are ready? You know that you cannot be sure of any one of these things. You know that you can only call the *present moment* your own. Then delay not to use it. To use the illustrations before us, bind the scarlet line in your window; trust in the blood of Christ. God has given you this moment. He has waited for you till now; He may wait no longer. As you read these pages, ponder these solemn truths. Lift up your heart to Him who boweth down His ear to hear, with the prayer

of Rahab, "Give me a true token," and you shall not ask in vain.

God has given you a Saviour, Jesus Christ; trust in Him. Then, and then only, you are saved, and have the "true token" of the One who cannot lie, that you shall never perish. For "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, that WHOSOEVER believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and "he that believeth on Him is not condemned."

VIII.

THE WORKS OF FAITH.

"*Likewise also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?*"—JAMES ii. 25.

I CANNOT close this volume, or leave the portion of God's Word which has been the subject of consideration, without dwelling for a short time on an important point connected with the history of Rahab, which the Holy Spirit has noticed for our instruction.

We can hardly find in the Scriptures a more striking instance and illustration of salvation "by *grace* through *faith*" than that of Rahab, a woman of bad character, marked for destruction with the ungodly people among whom she dwelt. She could urge no plea why she should be saved when others justly perished; she deserved the judgment as much as they did; her character was no better; her sins as great. Yet, while they perished, she was saved.

It was not their persecution of the messengers

that Joshua sent or her reception of them, that brought destruction upon the dwellers in Jericho, or that entitled her to salvation; for though her treatment of the spies is mentioned as part of her conduct, we are particularly told that it was not by such conduct as a "good work" that she was saved, but "by *faith*;" "by *faith* the harlot Rahab" perished not with them that *believed not*. Their treatment of the spies was a result of their determined unbelief; her reception of them was a consequence of her faith: but they were destroyed because of their unbelief, which was the root of all their sins; she was saved by faith, which was the root of all her subsequent conduct. Yet in each case the mental condition was accompanied by certain actions, which were its most distinct proof.

We have further seen illustrated in her story the certainty of salvation to those who trust in the way of salvation appointed by God. In her case it was a scarlet line: in ours it is the crimson blood of Christ; in other words, a crucified Saviour. As she was sheltered under and saved by that line, which was a token between her and Joshua, so are sinners who trust in Jesus sheltered under and saved by His blood, who is the only token between them and Jehovah, and concerning whom the word has been declared, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." And again, as she knew that she was safe, because she had a

true token from the spies—not her feelings of safety, but their solemn oath—so do we, who rest in Jesus as a Saviour, know that we "can never perish," and "never come into condemnation," because we have the infallible, unchangeable word of Him who cannot lie.

As it was no presumption in her case to believe what the spies told her—"the witness of men"—nay, rather would have been an insult to entertain a doubt of their veracity, so it is no presumption on the part of those who trust in Jesus to take God at His word, and to believe that thus trusting they *have* eternal life. It is, on the contrary, the gravest insult to doubt the fact of which the God of truth assures them; for "the witness of God is greater" than "the witness of men," and the record which He testifieth is this, that "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."

And what a salvation it was! To what a height of honour and glory was this poor sinful woman raised, when saved by the grace of God! Taken out of the ruin that overwhelmed all around her, yet accompanied by those she loved—"her father and her mother and her brethren and all that she had, all her kindred"—she was first "left without the camp of Israel," doubtless to undergo those ceremonial purifications whereby alone she could be qualified to take a place amid the people of God, and then she was brought into the camp, formally adopted into the families of Israel, for it

is written, "she dwelleth in Israel unto this day."

What a marvellous change of position! No longer a "child of wrath" as she had been by nature and practice, she was made partaker of all the privileges of the people of God. Once an "alien from the commonwealth of Israel," a "stranger from the covenants of promise," "sometimes far off," she was now "made nigh." To her and to her kindred it could be said, as to other Gentiles in a later day, "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." In the words of Hannah, God had "raised up the poor out of the dust, and lifted the beggar from the dunghill to set them among princes." Rahab and her family were a wonderful instance of the grace of God.

But it did not stop there. As if God would show what the "exceeding riches of His grace" can do, and how out of the trodden-down stones of earth He can fashion the brightest jewels in His crown of glory, yet greater honour was in store for Rahab. Saved from destruction, purified from her guilt, adopted into the family of God, she was to become a mother in Israel. She who had yielded herself a servant to sin was to bring forth fruit unto God, as one alive from the dead. One from the tribe of Judah took her to wife, and in "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ the Son of

David." we find her name as the mother of Boaz, from whom sprang in three successive generations Obed, Jesse, David!

Such is still the grace of God. Here, as elsewhere, He singles out the lowest and the worst specimens of humanity to show conspicuously that badness of conduct and character are no obstacle to His salvation, any more than goodness of conduct and character are pre-requisites for it: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." He who "receiveth *sinners*" takes a dying thief from the cross straight into paradise, transforms a proud persecutor of the Church into the humblest but mightiest of apostles, makes a sinful woman of Samaria a preacher of Christ to a whole city, and brings the guilty Rahab into a position of inconceivable glory amongst His people. Truly may He say, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." And as truly may we, while we wonder and adore that grace, say, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

But while "the grace of God bringeth salvation" unto sinners, and brings them into union with Christ and with His people, it brings them *out* of their sins. Jesus is a Saviour who saves His

people "*from* their sins;" and while that salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast," they who are saved are "created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that (they) should walk in them." There is no Antinomianism in justification by faith; it is, on the contrary, the only foundation on which works of righteousness can be built—it is the only starting-point for a really holy life. And while the word of God unsparingly rejects all so-called good works as affording the slightest ground of hope for salvation, it uncompromisingly asserts the invariable connection between true faith and works of righteousness.

When treating of the cause of salvation, it asserts the valuelessness of works; when speaking of the result of salvation, it insists on the indispensability of works. And these two lines of argument are not contrary to, but the complement of, each other. They do not contradict, but confirm one another. Of one doctrine Paul is the principal expositor in the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians; of the other James is the determined upholder; and while each is dwelling on his particular theme, it would almost appear as if he denied the truth of the other. Yet Paul is not contending with James, and James does not contradict Paul. They are not fighting with each other for particular doctrines. but against special errors, which attack the truth from different sides. They are not fighting face to face, but back to back. Paul is wrestling

with the self-righteous Pharisee who would use his works as stepping-stones to heaven; James is striking at the deluded Antinomian who argues that if we are saved by faith, there is no necessity for good works. And thus both are "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

And what is true of the doctrinal teaching of Paul and James, is also true of the illustrative teaching of every instance given us in the Scriptures of saved sinners. In one way or another they every one show though it is "not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to the mercy of God" that we are saved, it is in order that we may be "filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."

It is with this object, that while in the Epistle to the Hebrews Rahab is adduced as an example of salvation by faith, in the Epistle of James her conduct is referred to as proving that true faith is accompanied by works; and I would now briefly dwell upon two points in her conduct as related in the Scriptures, which strikingly confirm the latter truth. Her faith was accompanied and proved by works; in other words, she was "justified by works;" this is seen in her kindness to the people of God, and in her efforts for the salvation of others.

In her treatment of the people of God. She "received the spies with peace." This is specially mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in con-

nection with the fact that she was saved by faith. It was not her receiving the spies with peace that saved her, for we are expressly told that it was "by *faith*" that "the harlot Rahab perished not." She could not be saved by faith *and* works; it must be by either one or the other, not by both. For if salvation be of works then "grace is no more grace." But if it be of grace then "work is no more work." Her salvation was by faith, that it might be of grace, and therefore her works, *i.e.*, her actions—the reception of the spies—had nothing to do with her salvation, as a ground or cause of it.

Yet they are mentioned in connection with it, because they resulted from it and proved it. Her works were the evidence of her faith, but she was saved by the faith, not by the evidence of it. Faith was the root, works were the fruit. It was because she believed, really believed in coming judgment, really trusted to God for mercy, that she acted as she did, and treated the spies with kindness. Thus her works were the "things that accompany salvation;" and if she had not acted as she did, her profession of faith would have been belied; it would have been a mere profession without any reality.

It was to show that where real faith exists, it will prove itself by "works," that James refers when he says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son

upon the altar?" (James ii. 21). There were professing Christians in his day whose profession was an empty one; people who talked about justification by faith, but who only talked about it; persons who believed there was "one God," but whose faith went no further. Such faith he told them was a dead faith, being "without works," it was like a body without a spirit: it was merely the faith of devils, who "also believe and tremble." These people had "a power of godliness," but they were "denying the power thereof." They "professed that they knew God, but in works they denied Him." He, therefore, adduces two instances from the Scriptures, one from the top of the social scale, the other from the bottom—one the father of the faithful, the other the harlot Rahab, both of whom were "justified by faith," to show that their justification by *faith* was accompanied by justification by *works*, and that thus the completeness, reality, thoroughness of their faith was proved—in other words, "faith was made perfect."

Not that it was imperfect, or incomplete before. In the sight of God Abraham's faith was true and perfect in that night when, called to believe that his seed should be as the stars of heaven on which he gazed for multitude,—he took God at His word, and "against hope, believed in hope, giving glory to God." Then and there "he believed God;" then and there "it was accounted unto him for righteousness." He was then justified—saved by

faith; and when Paul is arguing against those who sought to stablish their own righteousness by their own works, he brings forward the case of Abraham as that of one who was saved not by works but by faith, and he makes no mention of his works at all.

When, however, James would show that works of righteousness do accompany living faith, he also refers to Abraham, and says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" But it is very evident that though his works—namely, his sacrifice of Isaac—proved his faith to be real, they did not justify him before God, since we find that the offering up of his son took place several years subsequent to the time when it was said that his faith was imputed to him for righteousness. He was perfectly justified in the sight of God, when, through faith, he was accounted righteous. That was a complete transaction. The subsequent sacrifice of Isaac was an outward sign and proof of faith; and thus "faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect."

So it was with Rahab. She was saved by faith; her reception of the spies, and her treatment of them, proved her faith. Had she been destitute of faith, her house would have been as closed to the spies as the rest of Jericho. But because she believed in coming judgment, and in the power of Jehovah, the God of Israel, therefore she received

them "with peace," instead of seeking to slay them, and "sent them out another way," when the King of Jericho endeavoured to apprehend them. She behaved with kindness to the servants of the Lord, because she trusted in their Master.

Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, and Rahab's treatment of the spies, exhibit two main points in which the faith of those who trust in Jesus is manifested and "made perfect;" and without which their faith would be but an empty name, since "faith without works is dead." One direction in which real trust in God is manifested, is by surrendering to Him that which we hold most precious, our Isaacs, ourselves. The believer receives salvation from God, and then gives himself to God. Having trusted in Jesus, and thus become a recipient of "the mercies of God," the proper consequence is the presentation of his body (himself) to God as a living sacrifice. This is real *self-denial*, the fruit of true faith, and therefore its manifestation, and its complement.

Where this does not follow, faith does not have its "perfect work;" there is an incompleteness in the life and experience of such an one; he does not "prove (*i.e.*, experience) the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." It was when Abraham, who had been justified long before, offered up his son Isaac, that he received a second edition of the promise, and that it was confirmed by an oath to him. Had he failed to surrender his son—in fact,

to surrender himself—he would not have been less justified, for that was an antecedent fact which could not be undone, but he would have come short of the fulness of the experience of blessing, and he would not have been called "the Friend of God" (James ii. 23).

That this may be the result in all the children of God, is the object of the apostle's exhortation in the sixth and twelfth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, where after dwelling on, and enforcing the fulness and freeness of salvation without the deeds of the law, he urges on those who are saved, and thus "alive from the dead," that they should "yield themselves unto God."

Another direction in which real trust in God is manifested is, as in the case of Rahab, by the hearty reception and love of God's people. This is dwelt on at length in the Epistle of James, where the treatment of the brethren is almost, it may be said, the main subject (see especially chap. ii. 15, 16). And it is again a prominent subject in the First Epistle of John, who instances love to God's people as a great proof of the existence of spiritual life, for he says (1st John iii. 14) "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." In Paul's Epistles it comes forward continually, as, for instance, when he praises God for his Colossian converts, he mentions "faith in Christ Jesus, and love to all the

saints," as the things which led him to give thanks for them.

And is it not the actual experience of every one who really trusts in Jesus that he loves others who trust in Him. He realises an attraction towards them which is new and mysterious. Once he hated and fled from them; the society of decided Christians was obnoxious and unpleasant; the presence and conversation of anybody and everybody was preferable to that of the followers of the Lamb. Their language was "cant," their manners "methodistical," their ways "strait-laced and hypocritical." But now he is involuntarily drawn to them. Though he may not like all equally, and though there may be in many of them, especially in the uneducated, ways and manners and habits of expression that are not exactly what he naturally fancies, he is conscious that he cannot help loving them. He feels that they have been washed in the same blood, renewed by the same Spirit, adopted into the same family,—that they have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all,"—that they have common dangers, common enemies, a common mercy-seat, and a common home, and he cannot but love them as brethren in Christ. Language, colour, caste, all lose their distinction in that body where "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ all and in all."

Yes! this is one great evidence of faith, one great proof of the possession of eternal life: "*We love the brethren.*" They may be kings or beggars, naturally attractive or unattractive. They may differ from us in a thousand things—in views of Church government, in many points of doctrine, in politics, in almost everything, but if they agree in this, that they trust in, love, and serve the Lord Jesus Christ, they are our brethren here, they will be our brethren in eternity, and we cannot help loving them.

This love will differ doubtless in intensity as much as persons differ from each other; it may be fostered in some, and be checked in others. Many things may hinder its expression; in some, it may accord to some extent with a natural temperament and flow forth easily: with others it may have to battle with habitual reserve and coldness, and may manifest itself with difficulty. But it will, it must, exist in all; for "*every one* that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him," and "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death;" "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John xiii. 35). This attraction to, and love for, God's people is generally one of the first proofs of a new life. No sooner does the persecutor of the Church come to Jerusalem, after receiving the forgiveness of his sins, than "he assays to join himself to the disciples." The moment Lydia's heart is

opened to believe in Jesus, she opens her house to the preachers of the gospel; and "that same night" that the jailer rejoices, believing in God, he takes those whom he had thrust into the inner prison, "washes their stripes, brings them into his house, and sets meat before them."

Such then are the works, or outward signs, which prove the existence and reality of an inward faith. As Rahab's faith evidenced itself by her reception of the spies, because they were the servants of Joshua, and thus she was "justified by works," so does the love to all saints constitute the outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual faith whereby we are saved. Justified by faith before God, we are justified by works before men.

But there was further proof of the reality of faith in Rahab. She was *concerned for the salvation of others.* Her first thought was for the welfare of those near and dear to her. Her entreaty was "show kindness to my father's house;" "save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have." This poor harlot had those whom she loved. Perhaps they had cast her off when she fell; and her purer sisters may have despised her, when she disgraced the family. Or perhaps their standard of morality was no better than hers, and they all together lived lives of flagrant sin. Be that as it may, no sooner did she espy even a chance of salvation for herself, than she

longed for others to share it. If they were fallen as low as she was, her natural instinct of love survived the fall, and she could not bear to be saved alone, while they perished; or if she was indeed abandoned by her kindred, as one worse than her neighbours, she knew that they as well as she stood exposed to the fall so soon to overtake the whole city, and she determined to do all she could to rescue them.

Was not this another fruit of faith? Had she not truly believed she would not have acted thus. And not only did she pray for their salvation, she made efforts to bring them into the enjoyment of it. It would appear that they did not live with her, and this would rather lead to the conclusion that she had fallen below their level. But they must share the despised one's home, if they would be saved, they must stand in the same place, and trust in the same way of salvation. They must come into her house. "Thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household home *with thee.*"

Can we not imagine the scene? They were probably like the rest of Jericho, self-confident, though once alarmed. Rahab must have gone to their houses, have imparted to them her deep conviction that all resistance, all reliance on the walls was useless, and have told them of the little scarlet line, that was to ensure salvation, and the certainty of that salvation in consequence of the oaths of the

spies. How strange must have been the interview, the conversation, the improbability of her tale, the earnestness of her entreaties, the gradual yielding of her relatives, and at last the consent to leave their homes, and to betake themselves to the despised one's house. On this we need not dwell her object was attained; she persuaded them to trust in the appointed and only way of salvation; and she had the joy, on that day, when judgment fell on Jericho, of seeing all whom she loved and cared for partakers of salvation, for "Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had." She was the happy instrument of the deliverance of her kindred. Thus again was her faith proved by works.

And this is also one of the very first directions in which the faith of the sinner, who has found a Saviour, manifests itself. Saved himself, he is at once moved with concern for others; he cannot bear to see them perish. Prayer to God for them, personal efforts to draw them unto Jesus, the only place of safety, are the earliest things to succeed his own salvation. There is no effort in it: it is natural: it is the spontaneous working of that lower feeling that God has implanted in the human heart, the love of kith and kin, ennobled by a heavenly impulse, the life and love of God. And just as it is natural for one who has heard good news, found a treasure, received a gift, to communicate it to and share it with others; so is it

the first and instinctive desire of the soul that has believed the good news of salvation, found a Saviour, and received pardon, to tell it out to those near and dear.

What was the first action of Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, when hearing the Baptist pointing to Jesus as "The Lamb of God," he follows, sees where he dwells, and learns of salvation from the Saviour's own lips? "He *first findeth his own brother* Simon, and saith unto him we have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus" (John i. 35–42). And what does Philip do the next day, as soon as Jesus had "found" him? "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John i. 45). And how does the woman of Samaria behave (so like in character, or at least in calling, to Rahab), when she had heard the marvellous words of Him that sat beside her at the well, "I that speak unto thee am He." "The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" (John iv. 28, 29).

Instances might be multiplied, but the fact is clear—borne witness to in the pages of Scripture, and in the experience of almost all who have been brought to trust in Jesus as a Saviour—a concern for the salvation of others, and specially of "those of

their own house," is the first impulse of the saved; and there is hardly a clearer proof of the reality of our own faith than the desire and effort to make others partakers of it.

This is one of the ways in which a God of wisdom makes the circumstances of nature subservient to His purposes of grace. He has not set us in families, instead of leaving us as units in the world, merely for social convenience or temporal advantage. He has not implanted in the heart of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, the deep, strong, all overpowering principle of love, only to cheer our earthly homes, and gladden the short pathway of life below. It is that hearts that beat with the love which, after all, is but "of the earth earthy," should by that very love be impelled to make those who are the objects of it, partakers of "the love that passeth knowledge," and "the peace that passeth all understanding."

Listen to that father of ancient days as there bursts from his lips the deep desire of his heart for his then only son, "Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee." Look at that prophet, greatest of all types of Christ, as he cries concerning his beloved Israel, "Forgive their sin, and if not, blot me out of Thy book which Thou hast written." And note again the outpouring of the mighty heart of the great apostle, as he says, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great

heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. ix. 1, 2, 3): and as he further exclaims, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. x. 1).

What was the great, the burning desire of Abraham, of Moses, of Paul? It was that those they loved might be saved. And did not the Lord Himself consecrate this natural desire when He said to the healed madman of Gadara, "Go *home* to *thy friends*, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee" (Mark v. 19). Yes, surely; He takes one in this family and one in that, a Rahab here, a Lydia there, a jailer at this time, and a Stephanas at another, not only to exhibit His sovereignty, but that they may be instruments in His hand for bringing all that are in their house to the knowledge of Him, thus manifesting their own faith, exercising the gifts that He has given them, and communicating to other hearts the rivers of living water that have flowed into their own, not to stay there and become stagnant, but to roll onward, fertilising the wilderness and the barren places till they blossom as the rose.

And thus this desire and effort for the salvation of others becomes a great proof of the reality of one's own faith. If we surely believe that the ship is

sinking, that the house is burning, that terrible disease is raging in our midst, we shall instantly and almost unconsciously seek to rescue others, and specially those whom we love, who are in danger. It will be impossible for us to sit idly by, with closed lips and folded hands, when a cry or an effort may be the means of saving perishing ones around us. Most certainly that man's faith must be a dead faith who has no desire to make others share in the glorious blessings which he professes to have received. He who has found deliverance from the wrath to come through the precious blood of Christ, and who trusts in the infallible word of the God of truth for eternal salvation, who sees the certainty of the rapidly approaching "end of the ungodly," and the glorious simplicity of the way of life, *must* have a burning desire to lead others to the same Saviour who has rescued him, and will assuredly, in one way or another, make an effort to pluck out of the fire those who are ready to perish.

And now, how shall we leave this subject and close this volume? We have traced some of the characteristics of the life and warfare of faith, we have beheld the awful picture of the irreversible ruin of those "who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and as we have again pondered upon one of the most striking illustrations of the salvation of lost sinners that the Word of God affords, we have seen how the

heart that has tasted the grace of God for itself instinctively and immediately prays and works for the salvation of others. Can we close with a more enkindling and solemnising subject?

"We know that is the *last time.*" While it is true that of that day and of that hour knoweth no man, the signs that are thickening around us are surely such as to make us who "see these things come to pass, look up and lift up (our) heads, for (our) redemption draweth nigh." In the deliberate judgment of many, of men of prayer and sober thought, the events that are taking place, —not discerned, it is true, in their connection with the development of the purposes of God by the men of this world,—are as the precursors of His advent, who "cometh with clouds," and who, when He comes to receive His own blood-bought people to Himself, comes also to execute judgment on a world that still says, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

Already, it is believed by many, has the sixth day passed, the sixth circuit been made, the sixth trumpet been sounded. The world continues the same; business and pleasure, self and sin, still hold almost undisputed sway; the feeble efforts of the little band of the followers of Christ have wrought no great deliverance, "the inhabitants of the world have not fallen;" Christianity is considered by its philosophers and mighty men obsolete and effete; the blasts of the trumpets of rams' horns have

almost ceased to attract attention; but, "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall *begin to sound*, the mystery of God shall be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets." Soon—it may be very soon—"the trumpet shall sound," there shall be "great voices in heaven;" the voice shall be heard "as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." "*Then* shall the end come."

Many already hear the midnight cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him," and are rising and trimming their lamps. But the door is not yet *shut*. There is still a moment, no man knows how quickly it may close, in which to warn the perishing, to point them to Christ, and "compel them to come in." We still have the unspeakable privilege of telling those around us of a place of safety, of a "true token," of a way of escape. While some may scoff at our preaching, and others may rely upon what seems to them a better way, some will hearken; we cannot labour in vain; God will bless His Word until the moment when the number of His elect is accomplished, and His kingdom comes.

Let us, then, be faithful to our trust; "instant in season and out of season," knowing that the time is short, and that "the night cometh when no man can work." There are still some to be

gathered in; they are close to us; our own kindred and neighbours are yet perishing for lack of knowledge; we can deliver to them the message, that "whosoever believeth in Jesus shall receive the remission of sins;" we can tell them that He who saved the harlot Rahab has saved us, and will save them, if they will but trust in Him.

Let not the fear of man's frown, or the love of man's praise, chain our tongues or paralyse our hands. Our labour shall not, cannot, be in vain in the Lord; and, oh, what joy unspeakable will it be when, amid the flames of a burning world and the glories of an opening heaven, we see among the redeemed of the Lord the "father," the "mother," the "brethren," the "sisters" of our earthly homes, and realise that, through the message God enabled us to give to them, they are saved with an everlasting salvation, to enjoy with us those "pleasures for evermore" that are at His right hand!

God grant, for Jesus Christ's sake, that you who have now read these pages may know what it is to be yourself saved through His most precious blood, and then make known to others the riches of His grace. Amen.

THE END.

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